Vagabond

vol. 27

Story & Art by Takehiko Inoue

Based on the novel "Musashi" by Eiji Yoshikawa

Vagabond Vol. 27

VIZ Signature Edition

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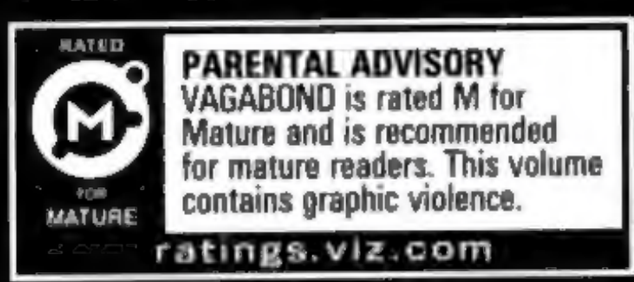

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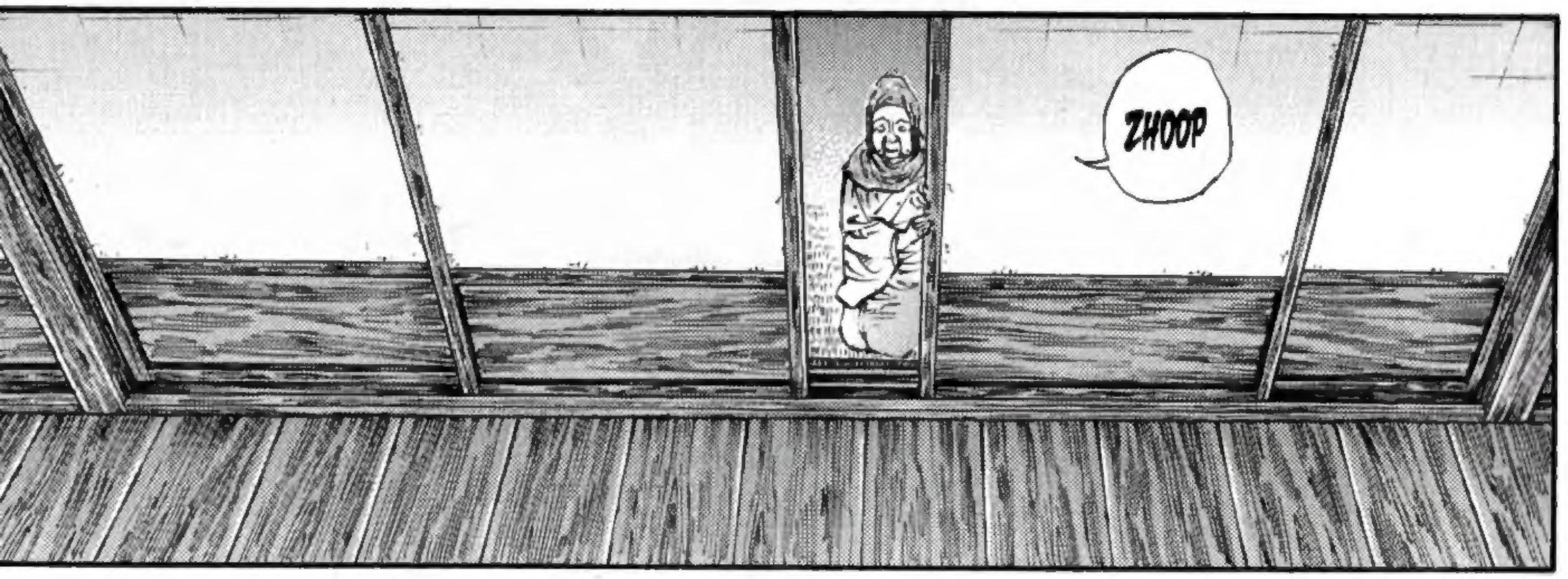
MUSASHI CUT ME DOWN...
KAHH
KAHH

U-UEDA ...!

...BUT MY EYES STILL SEE.
MY HANDS STILL HAVE USE...

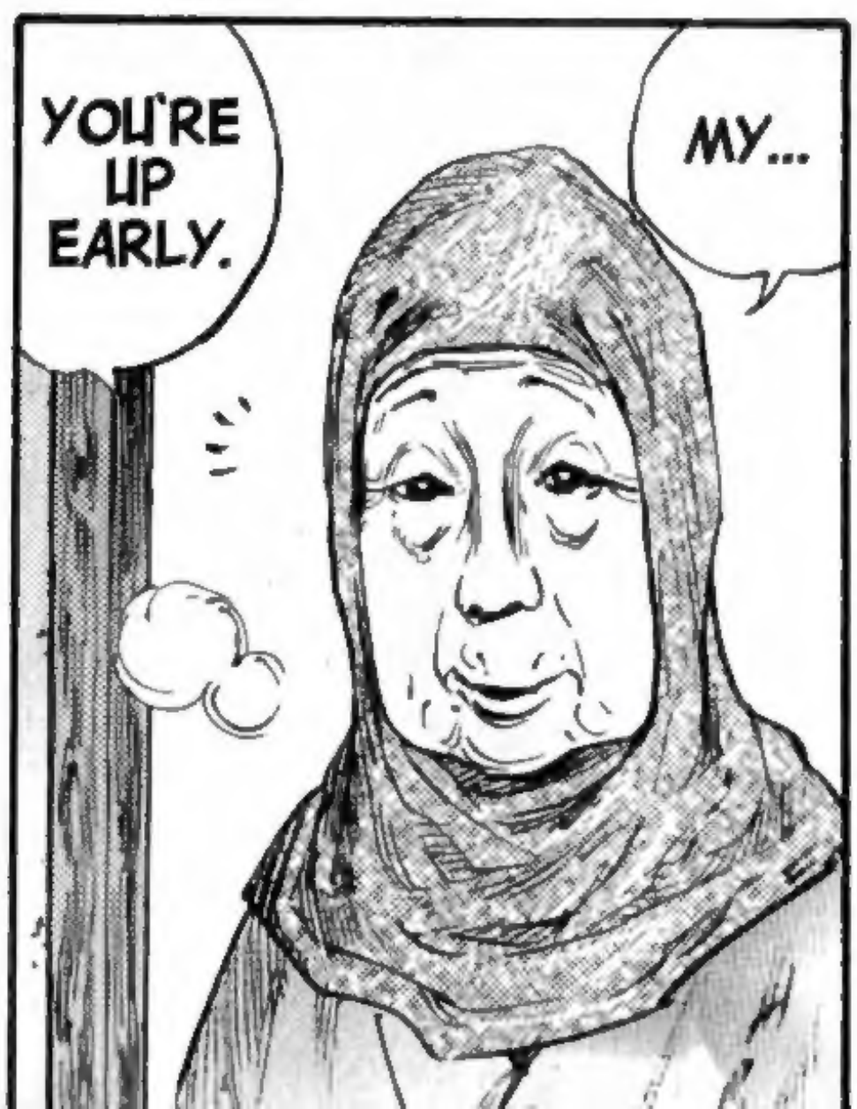
#234
The Onslaught

HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF


ZHOOP

CHIRRP

CHIRRP
CHIRRP

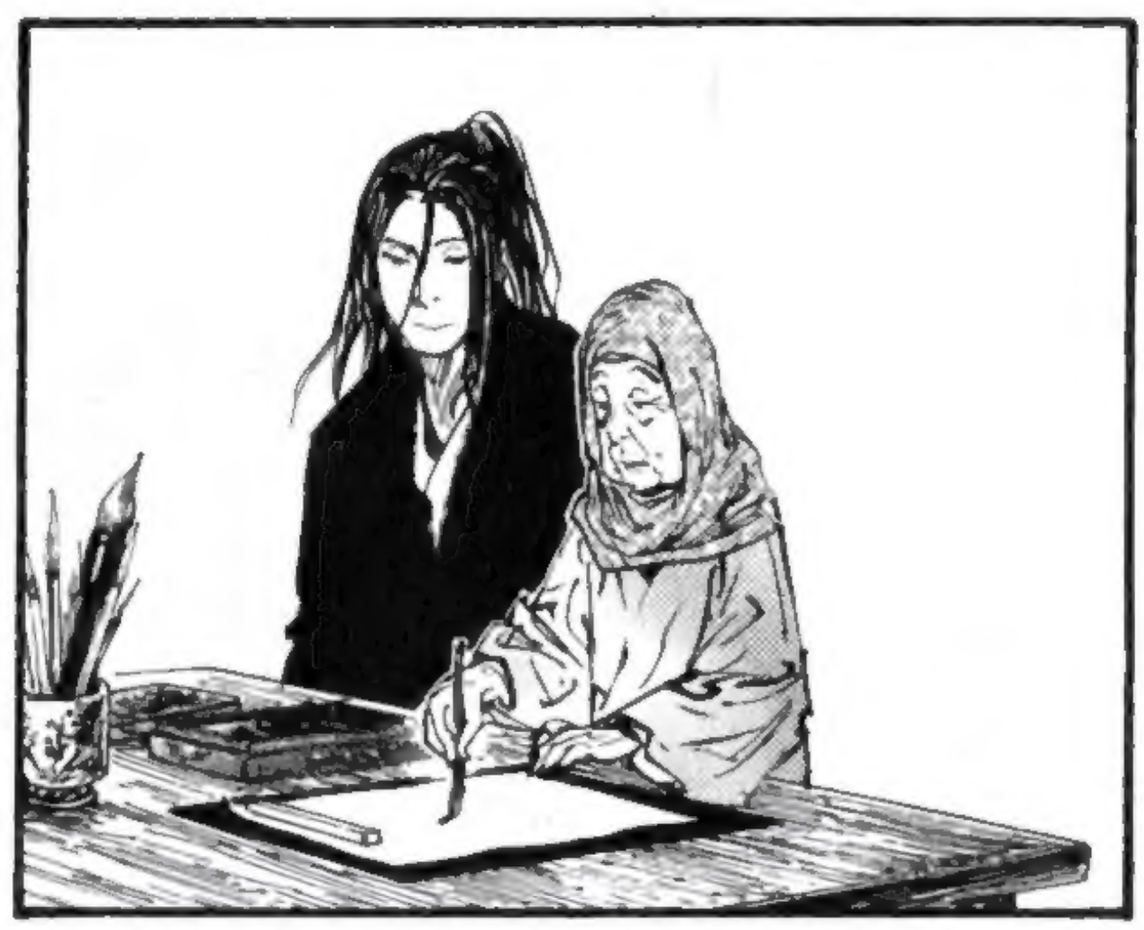

YOU'RE UP EARLY.
MY...

GOOD MORNING TO YOU TOO, KOJIRŌ.

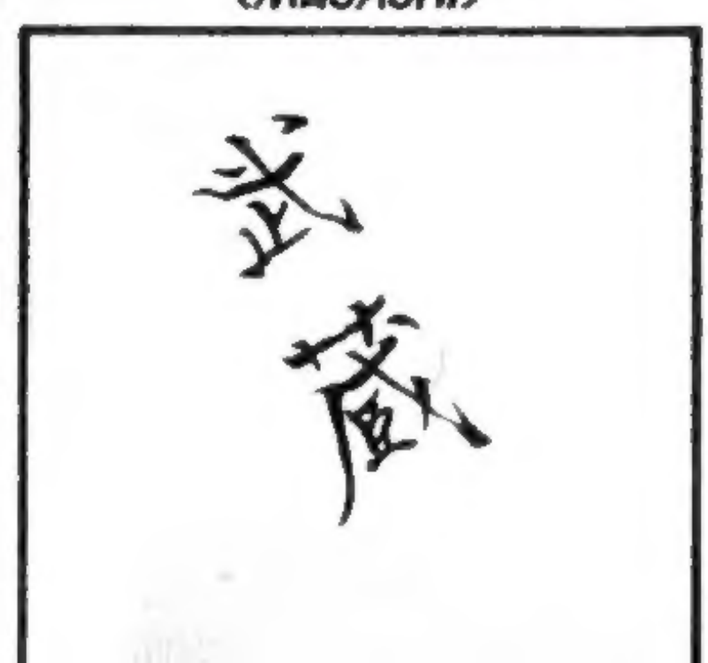
AUHH.

WHAT? YOU'RE ASKING ABOUT MUSASHI?

HE'S GONE.
I BELIEVE HE SAID HE WAS LEAVING KYOTO.



(MUSASHI)


武蔵

NO...

SEE, YOU NEED TO ADD A STROKE HERE AND HERE. AND...

武蔵

...

YOU ALMOST HAVE IT!

武蔵

HE'S STOPPED BRINGING GIRLS OVER, BUT NOW...

"MUSASHI" ...

"WHERE'S MUSASHI? WHERE'S MUSASHI?"
HE ASKS AT LEAST THREE TIMES A DAY.

THEY MUST HAVE STRUCK A CHORD WITH EACH OTHER.

FSH

HMM...

FSH

АЦНН...

...

AMAZING...

AUH!

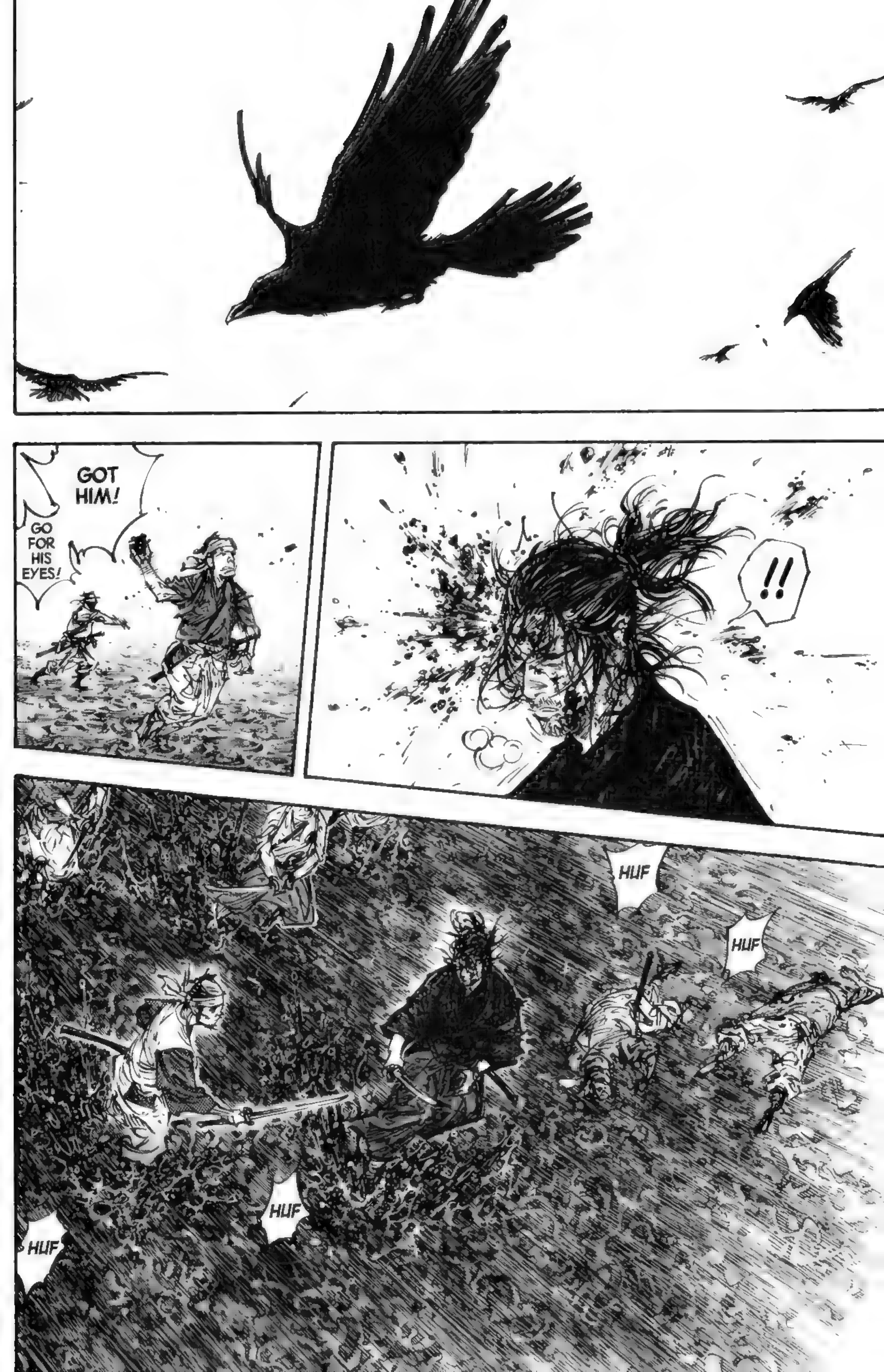
FWP

STILL WRONG HERE.

...

CHIRP

CHIRP


GOT HIM!
GO FOR HIS EYES!
!!
HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF

!!

WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!
SORRY!

IS IT THE MUD?
HUH? MY EYES...

ATTACK HIM ALL AT ONCE!

NO...

DIFFERENT COLORS.

YOU BASTARD!

I'LL KILL YOU!

THUNK

YOU'RE LYING.

HUF

HUF

HUF

YOU'RE IN THE WAY.

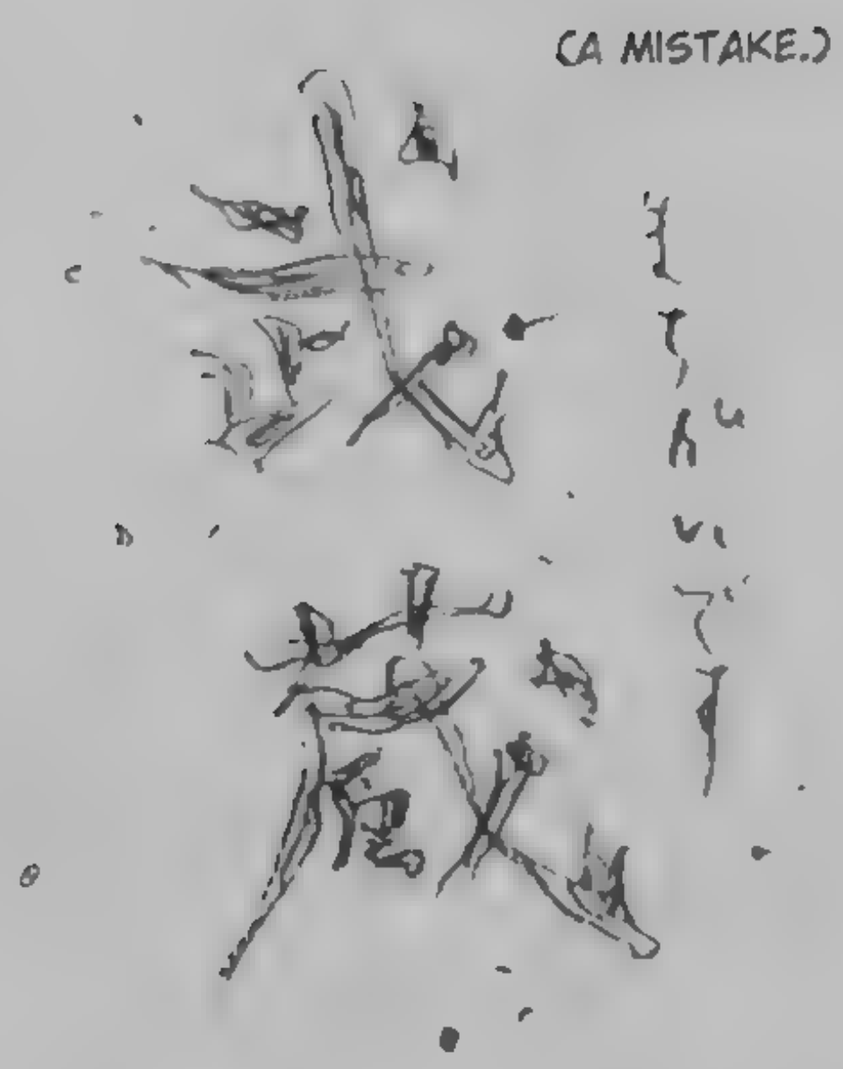
YOU DON'T HAVE THE RESOLVE TO DIE.

IN A TRUE FIGHT, OPPONENTS MUST BE MUTUALLY PREPARED FOR DEATH.

D-DAMN YOU!!
YOU LEAVE ME NO OTHER CHOICE...

THK

Vagabond


(A MISTAKE.)

#2335
Depth

FICH
DAMN IT.
THIS IS FUTILE ...

THE TRUTH OF THE MATTER IS...

...THE ERA OF THE SWORD IS LONG GONE.

THE MIGHTY YOSHIOKA...

WE HOLD OUR HEADS UP HIGH AND PROUD.

BUT WE'RE MERELY A COLLECTIVE OF MEN LEFT BEHIND THE TIMES.

LITTERLY DISPLACED, WE STILL ACT NOBLE.

IT'S TOO LATE FOR US TO FIND ANOTHER WAY...

GRAH
...

BUT YOU SAVED ME. MEETING A MAN LIKE YOU...

KRRAK
NNGH!

GRAB!!
...I DON'T REGRET LIVING BY THE SWORD.
...IT MADE ME REALIZE...

THANK YOU...

THANK YOU, MUSASHI.

YOU'VE GONE SO FAR.

YOU'VE RISEN TO HEIGHTS FAR BEYOND US.

SUCH GREAT DEPTH ...

RUSH HIM ALL AT ONCE!

HUF
HUF
HUF
YAHHH!

HUF
HUF
HUF
MOVE AWAY FROM HIM, YOICHI SENSEI!
THIS IS IT FOR ME...
CUT HIM!! DO IT NOW!
HURRY!
BUT YOU'LL BE--
COME ON NOW, ALL AT ONCE!
GO RIGHT THROUGH ME TO STAB HIM.

!!
HOW MANY HAVE ALREADY DIED? FORGET ABOUT ME!
FOOLISH!

KRAKK

!!
!!!!
ガバッ

YOICHI SENSEI!

PLISSH

ZOOSH

WHUD
HUF
HUF
HUF
SO HEAVY...

HYUU
HUF
MY BODY FEELS... HEAVY.
EVERY-THING'S SO HEAVY.

UMF...

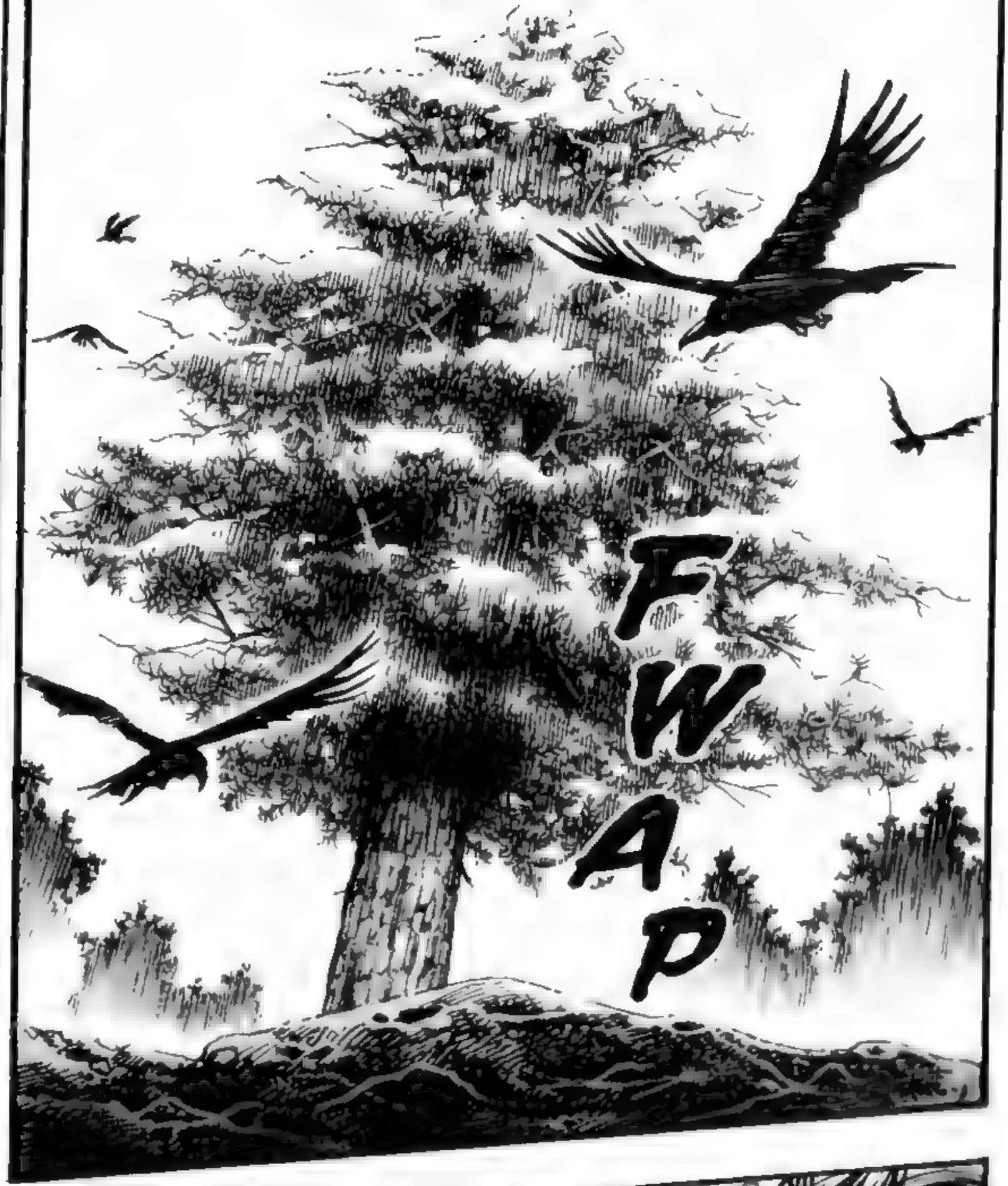
PLISH

KAWW

!!!!

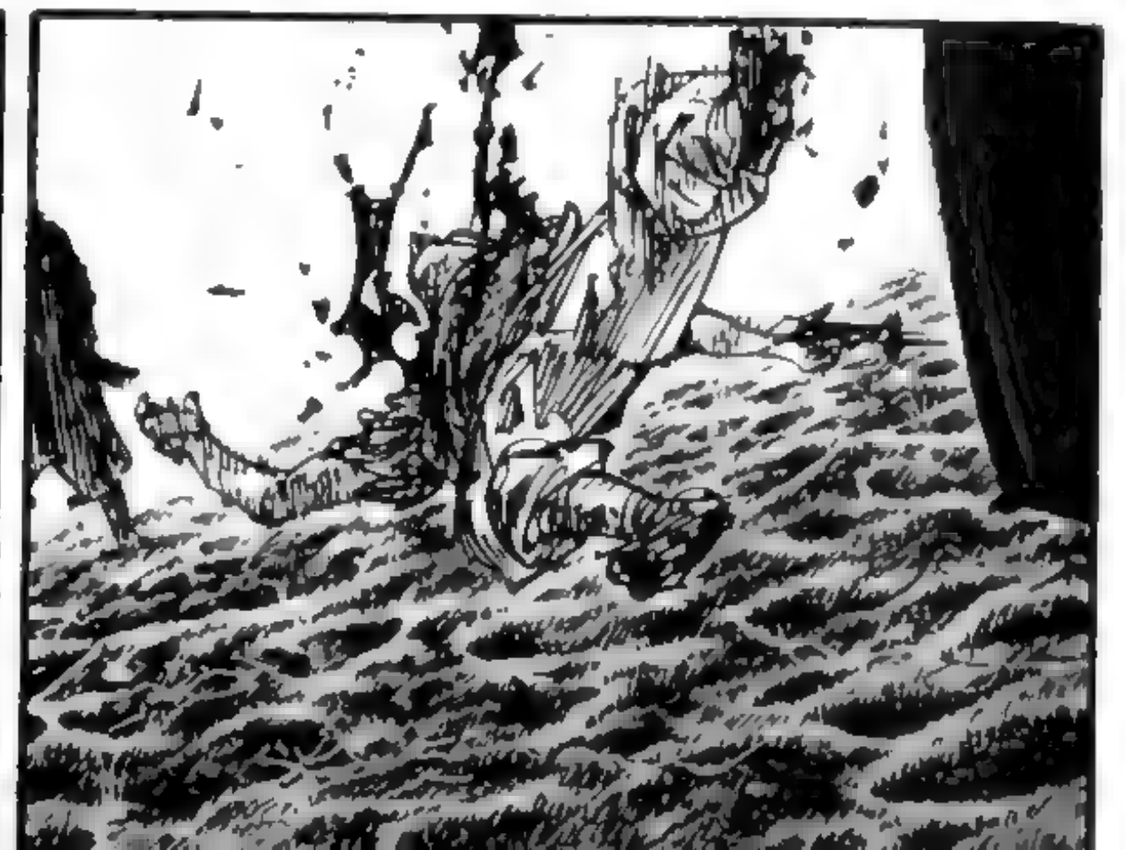
Vagabond

(NANPO YOICHIBED


FWAP

HUF
HAK
HUF
I'M FIN-ISHED.

I CAN'T EVEN MOVE.



#236

Battle Threshold

I LIVED MY LIFE THE WAY I WANTED TO.

!!
!!!!
WHO
...
HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF
...
IS THAT TRUE?

HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF
!!
!!!!!

I'VE LIVED A FULL LIFE...
...MY WAY.

GULP

HAK
THROAT'S BURNING.
KOFF
KOFF

MUSASHI...!

THAT LOOK IN HIS EYES...

SLISH

HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF
SLOG...
HUF
...
MUST ATTACK ...
PLISSH
...THE FORCE BEHIND HIS SWORD HAS INCREASED ...?
HE'S COMPLETELY EXHAUSTED.
AND YET...
HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF

SLOG !

YOICHI SENSEI ...

SEN-SEI...

...

HUF

HUF

FWOM

HUF

HUF

HUF

WE MUST RUSH IN ON HIM ALL AT ONCE...

BRRR

BRRR

TOGETHER...

YAHHH!!!

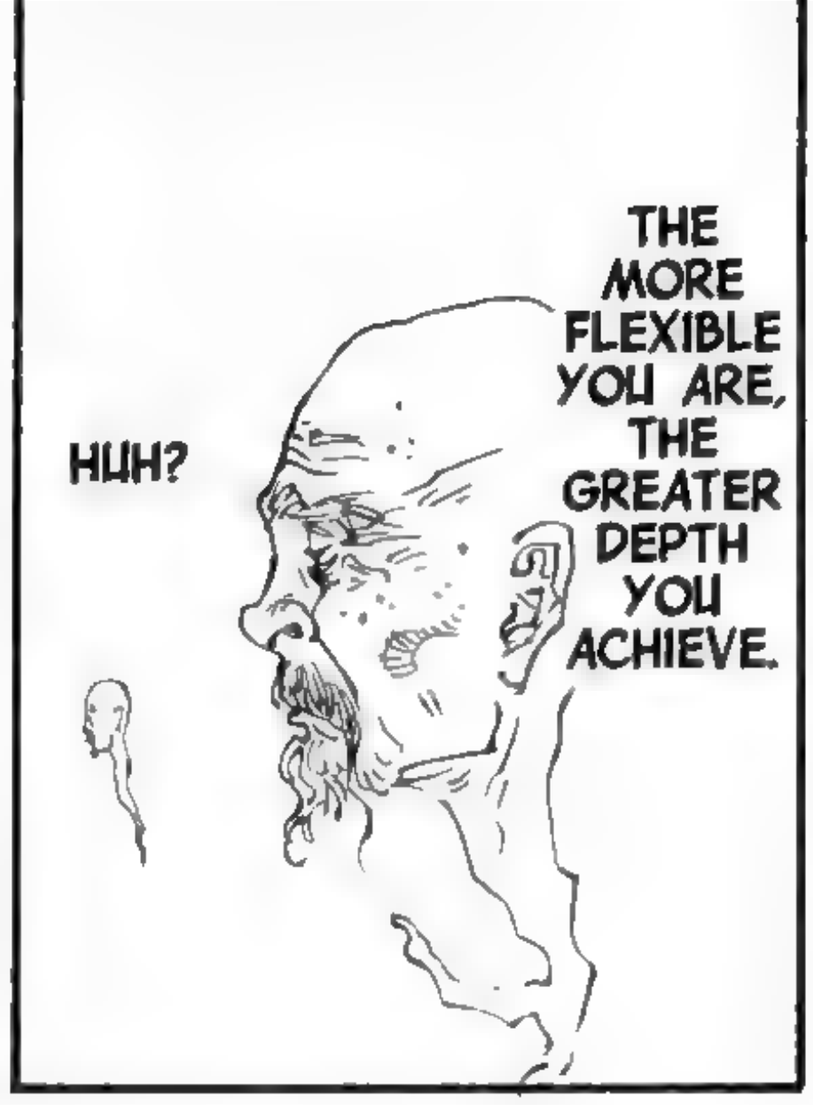
!!
SLOGG!
FWOMM
...
HE'S STAGGER-ING.
DON'T LET UP ON HIM!

SLOGG...
!!...!
ZZZ
LLISSH
ZSH
WHUD
SLOGG...

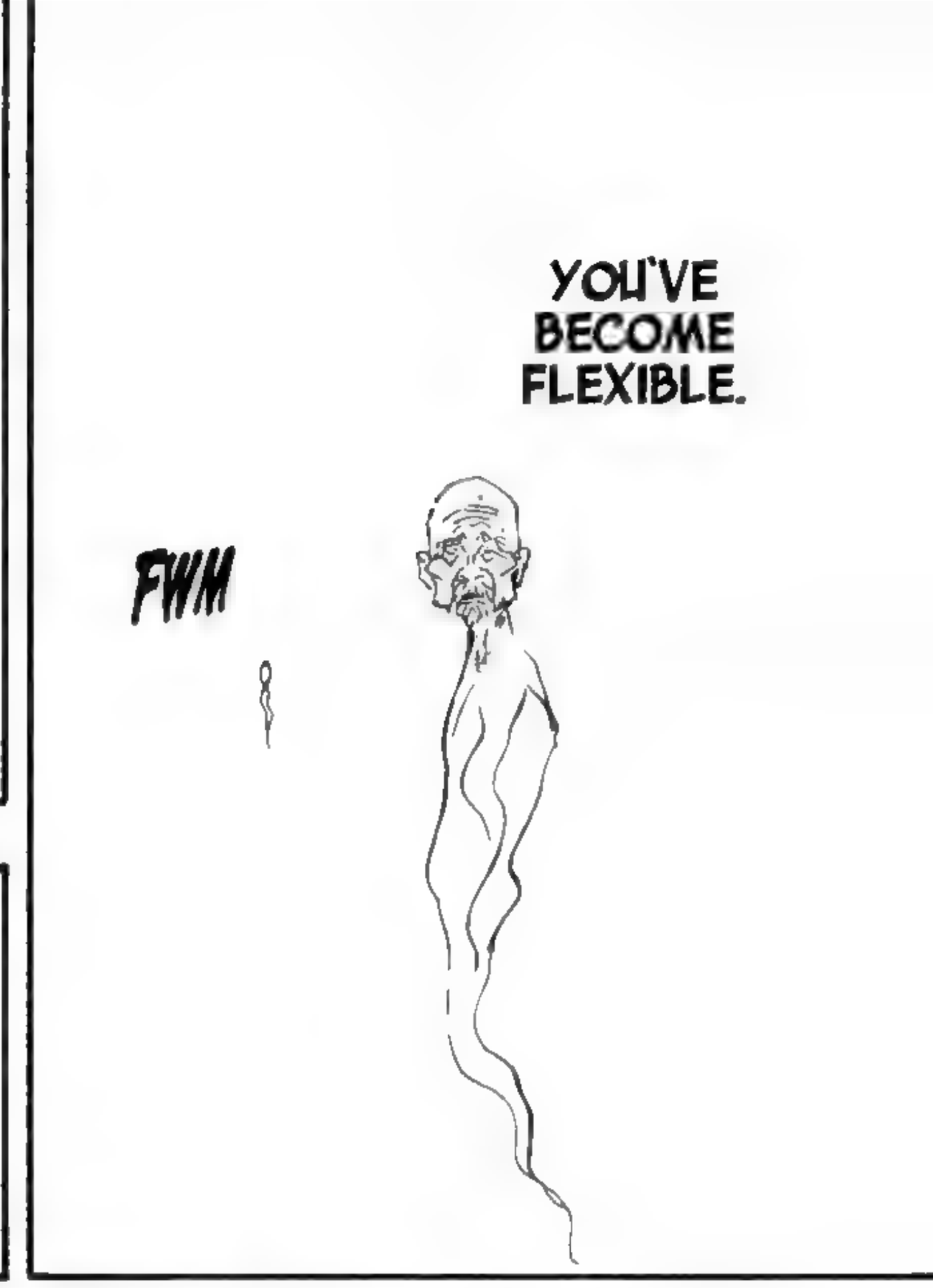
HUF
WHUD
HUF
HUF
...
FWOM
PLISSH
...
HUF
HUF
HUF
KCHK

HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF

WHAT'S THAT?
CONFI-DENCE ?


HUH?
THE MORE FLEXIBLE YOU ARE, THE GREATER DEPTH YOU ACHIEVE.

HM?
BINGO!


YOU'VE BECOME FLEXIBLE.
FWM

TRYING TOO HARD MAKES ONE TOO RIGID.
FLEXIBILITY IS CONFI-DENCE.

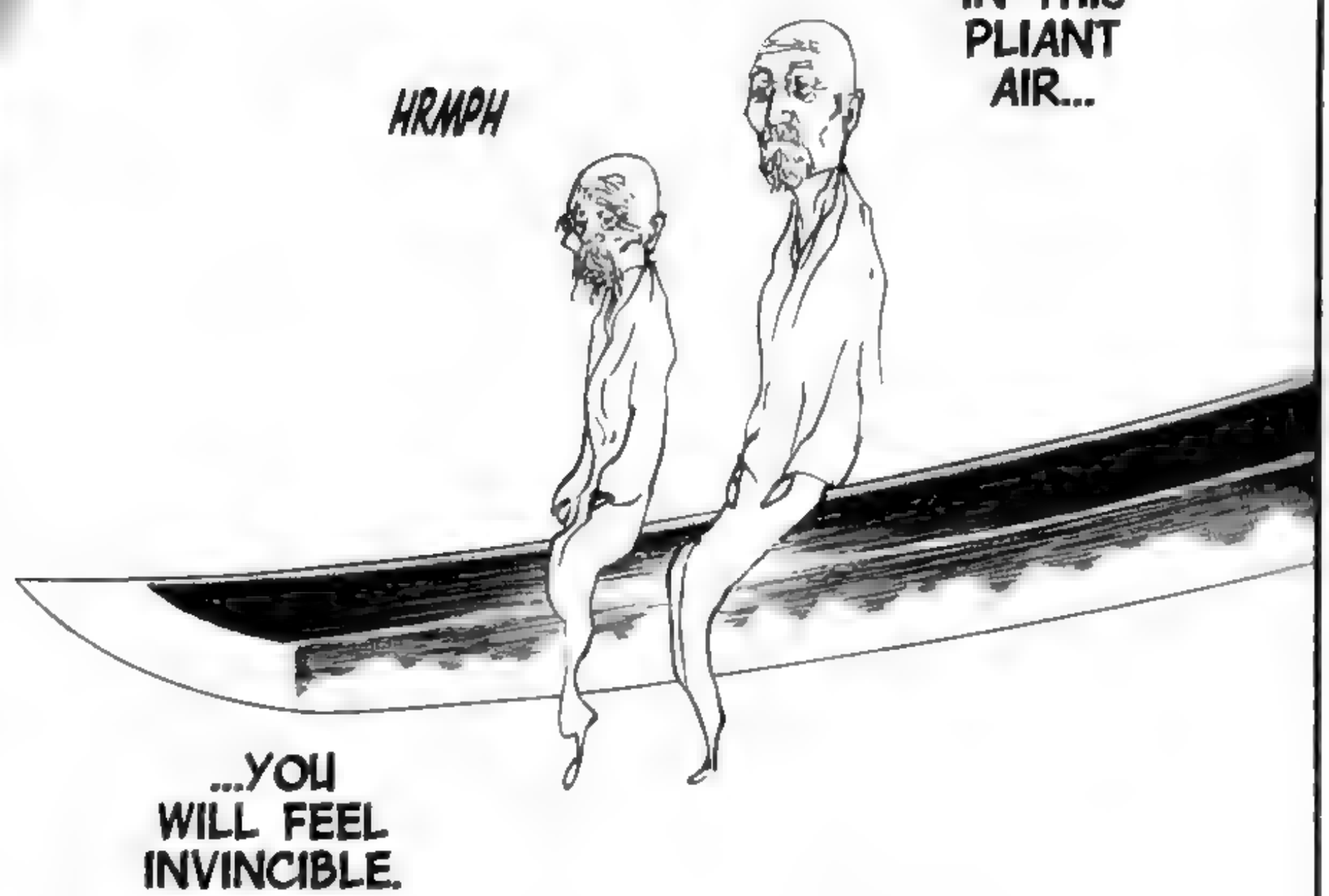
AND HERE TOO.
SEE, HERE...

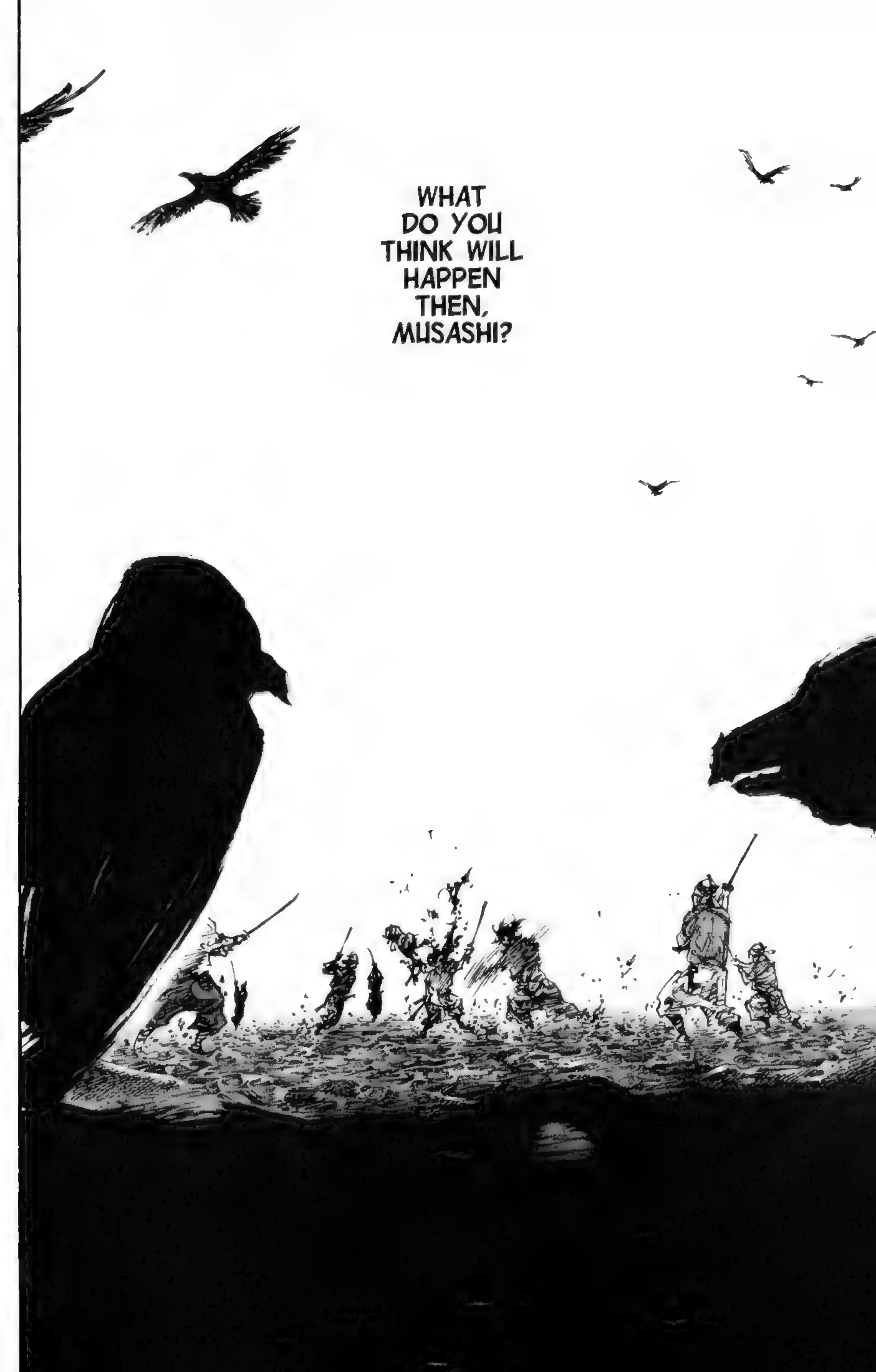
FAITH IN ONESELF IS WHAT MAKES UP CONFIDENCE.
FWM

HAVE CONFIDENCE IN THE VERY AIR THAT SURROUNDS YOU.

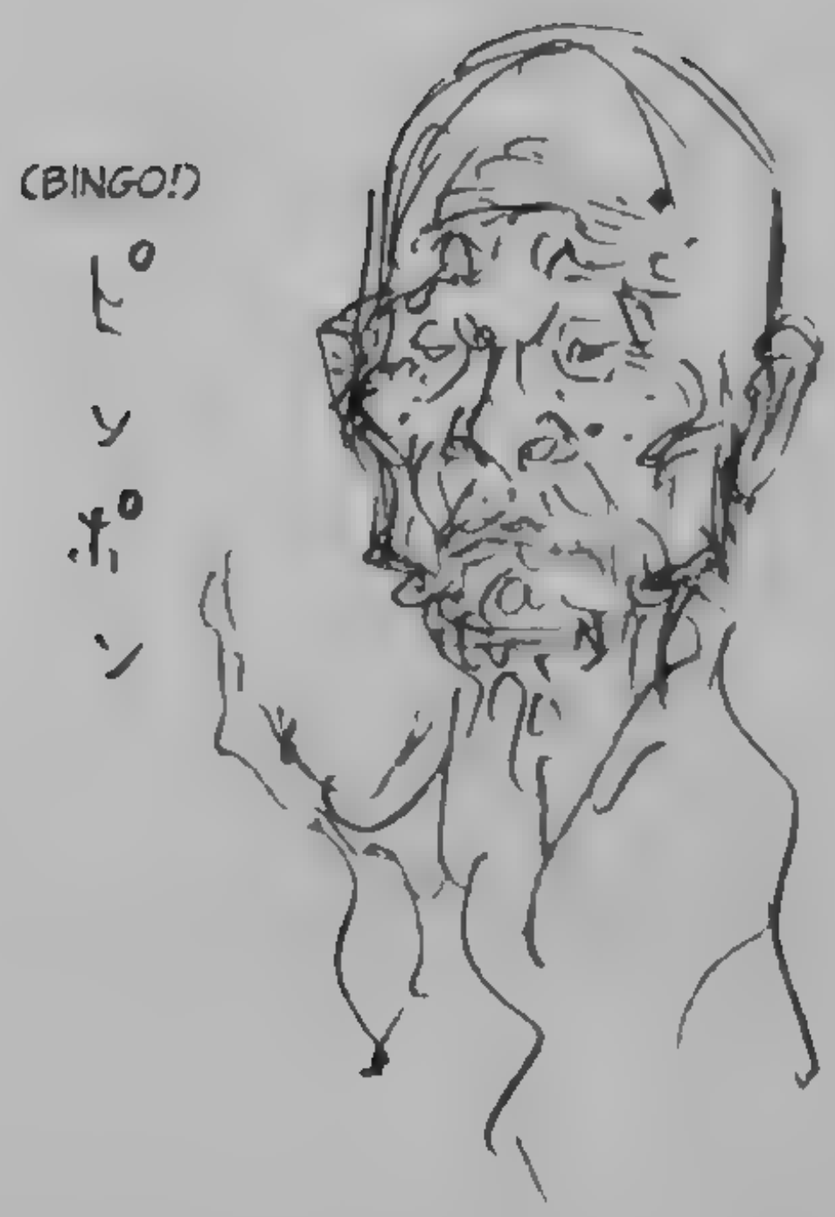
EXPAND YOURSELF OUT...

AND WHEN THIS AIR EXPANDS OUT TO DRAPE ITSELF AROUND YOUR OPPONENTS...




WHAT DO YOU THINK WILL HAPPEN THEN, MUSASHI?

Vagabond


(BINGO!)
ピンゾロ

#237
Somewhere
Along the Way

HUF
HUF

HUF

HUF

SLOGG...
HUF
HUF

SLOGG...
HUF
HUF

SLOGG
S--

SLOGG!

WHUD

HUF

HUF

HUF

HUF

SLOGG...
WHUD
...
HUF
HUF
IT'S AS IF HIS ARMS, NO, THE TIP OF HIS SWORD...
...HAS A LIFE OF ITS OWN.
BUT STILL...
NOT AS IF I CAN TRULY GRASP WHAT IT IS.
I CAN'T REALLY SEE THROUGH HIS TECHNIQUE.
...IT MAKES ME WANT TO PRACTICE MORE.

THIS IS MY CHANCE...
...EVEN NOW...
I FEEL AS IF...
I CAN STRIVE TO ACHIEVE GREATER HEIGHTS.
SLOGG...

KATHUNK

...GREATER HEIGHTS...

HUF

HUF

HUF

HUF
HUF
HUF

HUF
HUF
!!!!!

...
HUF
HUF

ONLY THIS MANY LEFT?
HUF

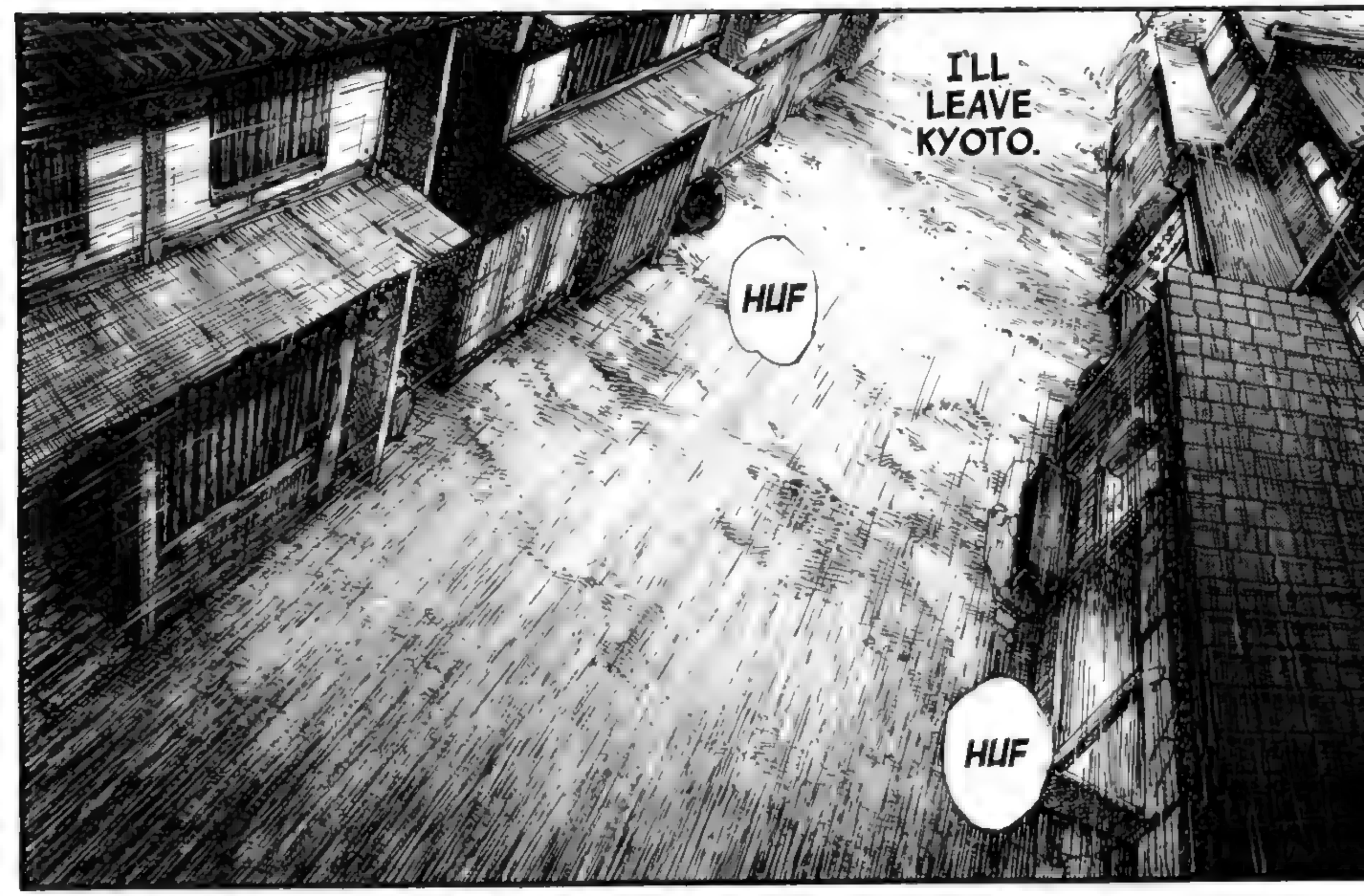
HUF
HUF

HUF
HUF

HUF
HUF

HUF
... THIS HELL...
HUF

I CAN GET OUT OF THIS...
I'M GOING TO MAKE IT...
HUF


I'LL LEAVE KYOTO.
HUF
HUF

HE'S LOOKING TOO FAR AHEAD.

OH?

I'M GOING TO ESCAPE THIS SPIRAL OF KILLING.
HUF
HUF
I'M GOING TO MAKE IT...
HUF

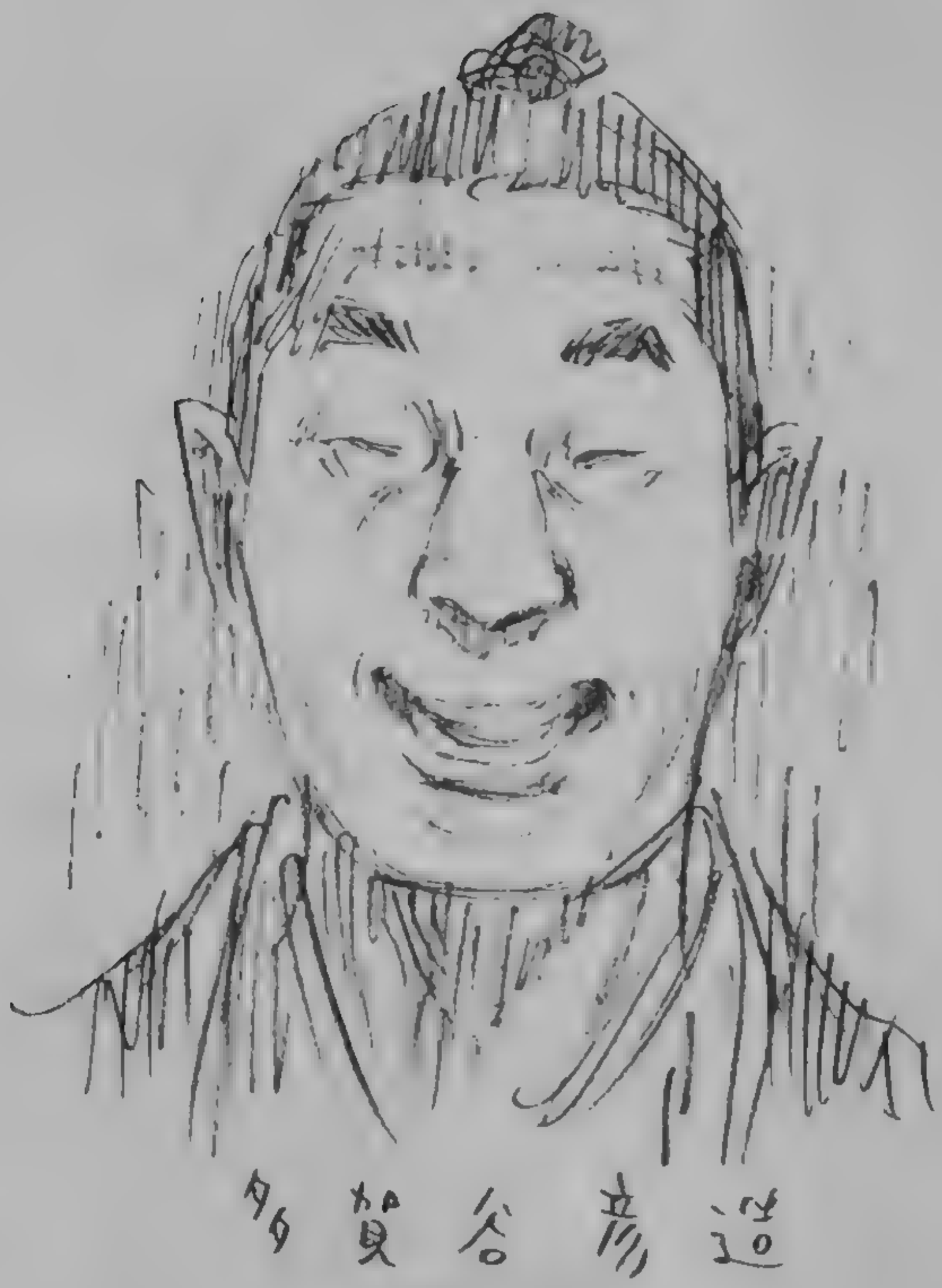
KLANG

HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF
TAGAYA HIKOZŌ OF THE TEN SWORDSMEN OF THE YOSHIOKA.
COMING ONLY THUS FAR ALONG THE WAY, I HAVE NO REGRETS...

...AS LONG AS I CAN TAKE THIS FIEND WITH ME...
HUF
HUF
HUF

HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF
TAGAYA!!
HUF
HUF
HUF

Vagabond



(TAGAYA HIKOZO)

HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF
YAHHH!

#238

Changing Times

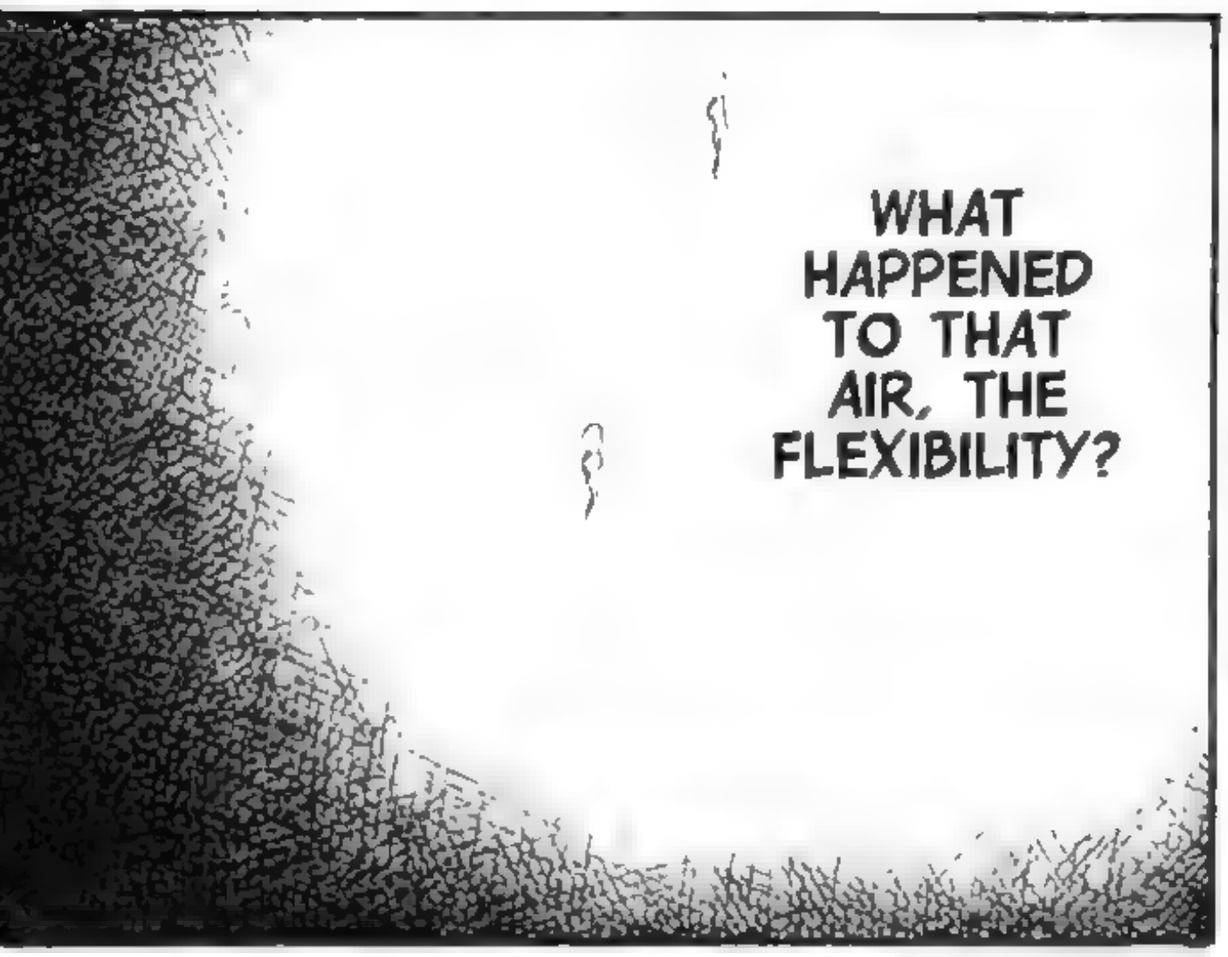
HUF
HUF
GAHH!
PLICH
KLANG

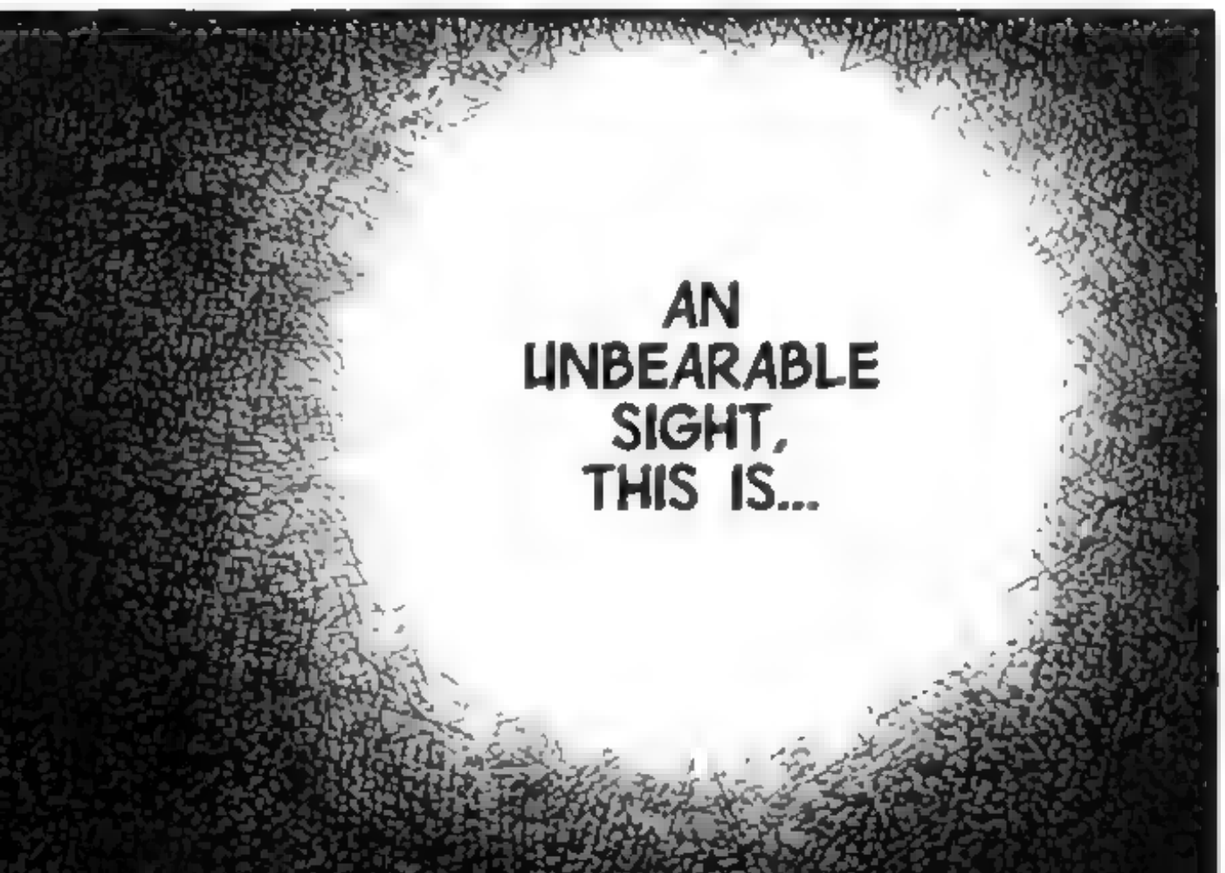
TMP

FWOOSH

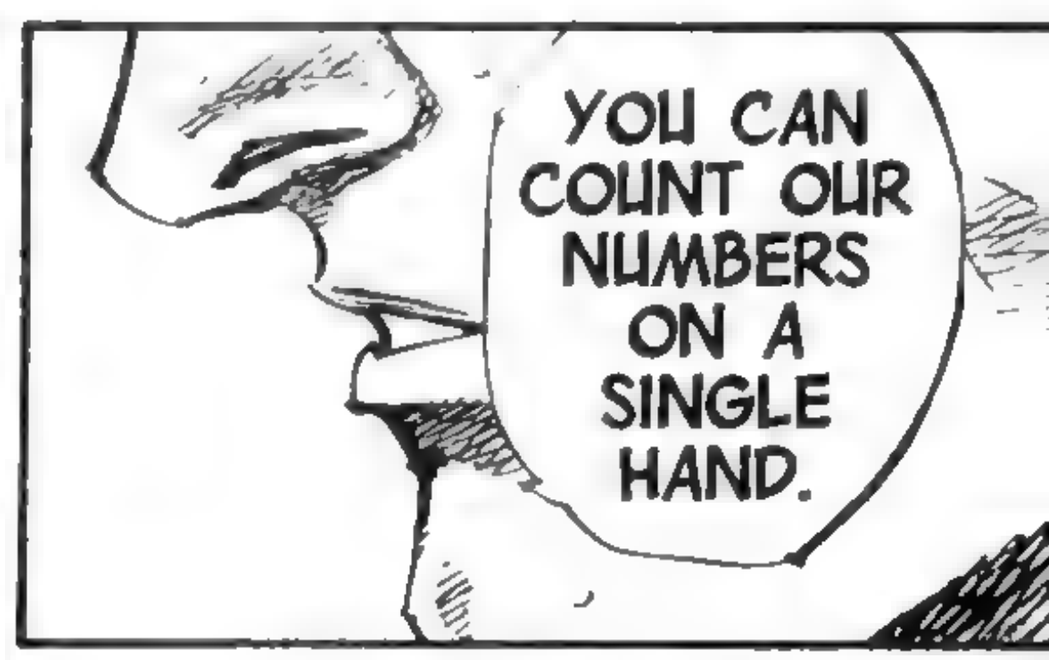
HUF

...



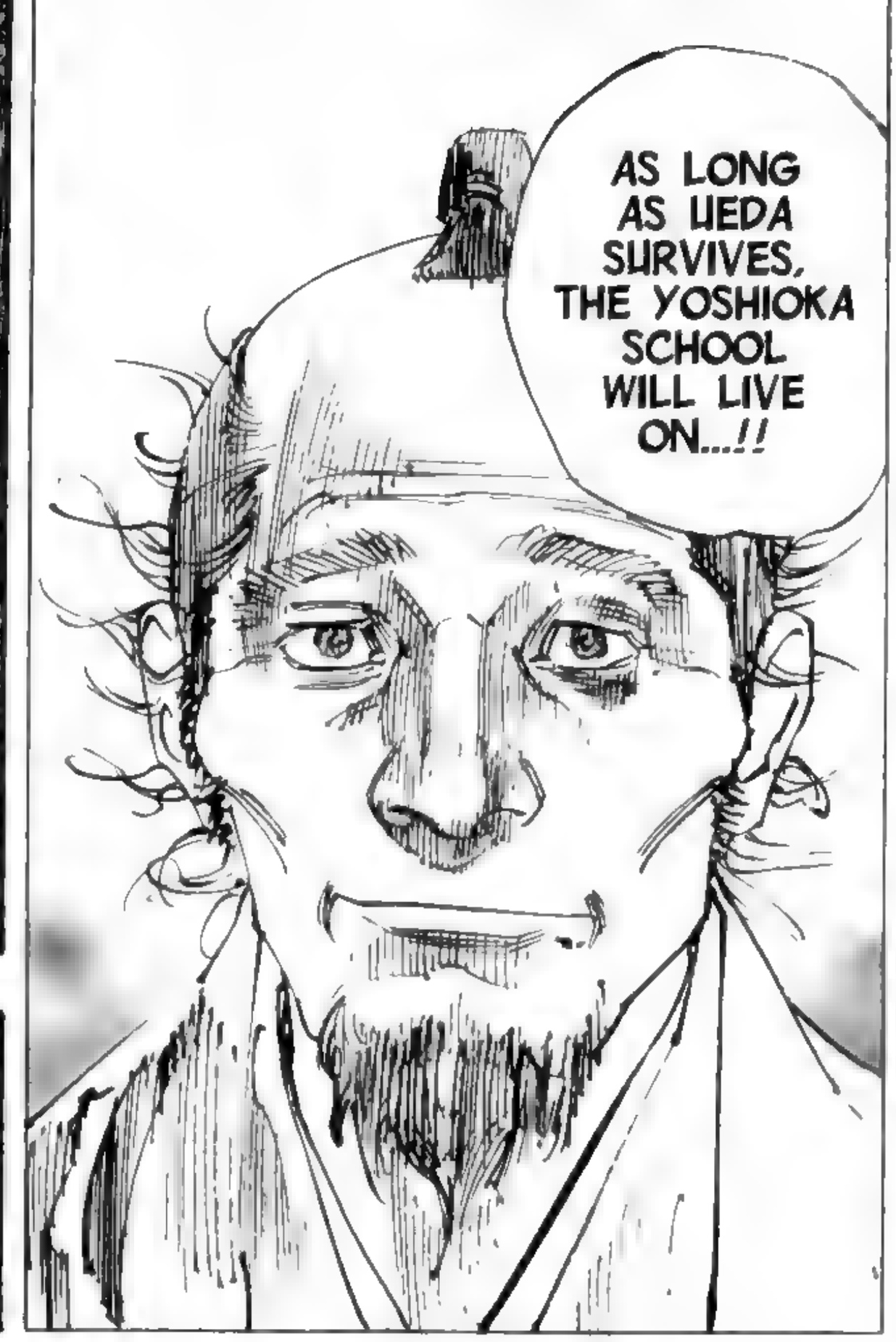


KURANDO, IS MUSASHI STILL ALIVE?



.....

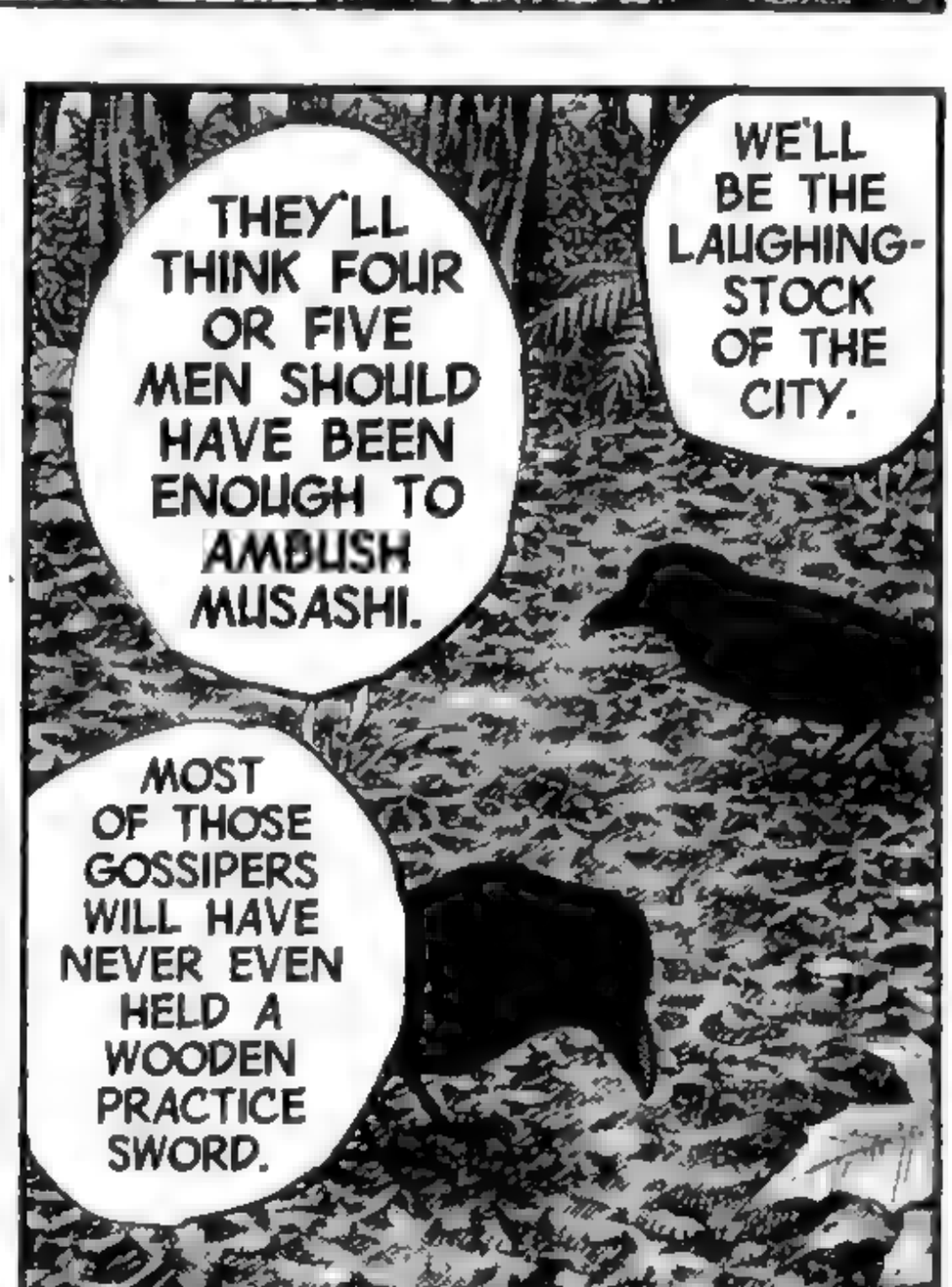
SAY, KURANDO ...


AS LONG AS UEDA SURVIVES, THE YOSHIOKA SCHOOL WILL LIVE ON...!!

.....
HE'S JUST A SINGLE MAN... AND WITH THIS MANY OF US, WE STILL COULDN'T MANAGE TO CUT HIM DOWN.

FIVE MEN...
...FACED A SINGLE MAN...

A LONG TIME AGO...


THEY'LL THINK FOUR OR FIVE MEN SHOULD HAVE BEEN ENOUGH TO AMBUSH MUSASHI.
WE'LL BE THE LAUGHING-STOCK OF THE CITY.
MOST OF THOSE GOSSIPERS WILL HAVE NEVER EVEN HELD A WOODEN PRACTICE SWORD.

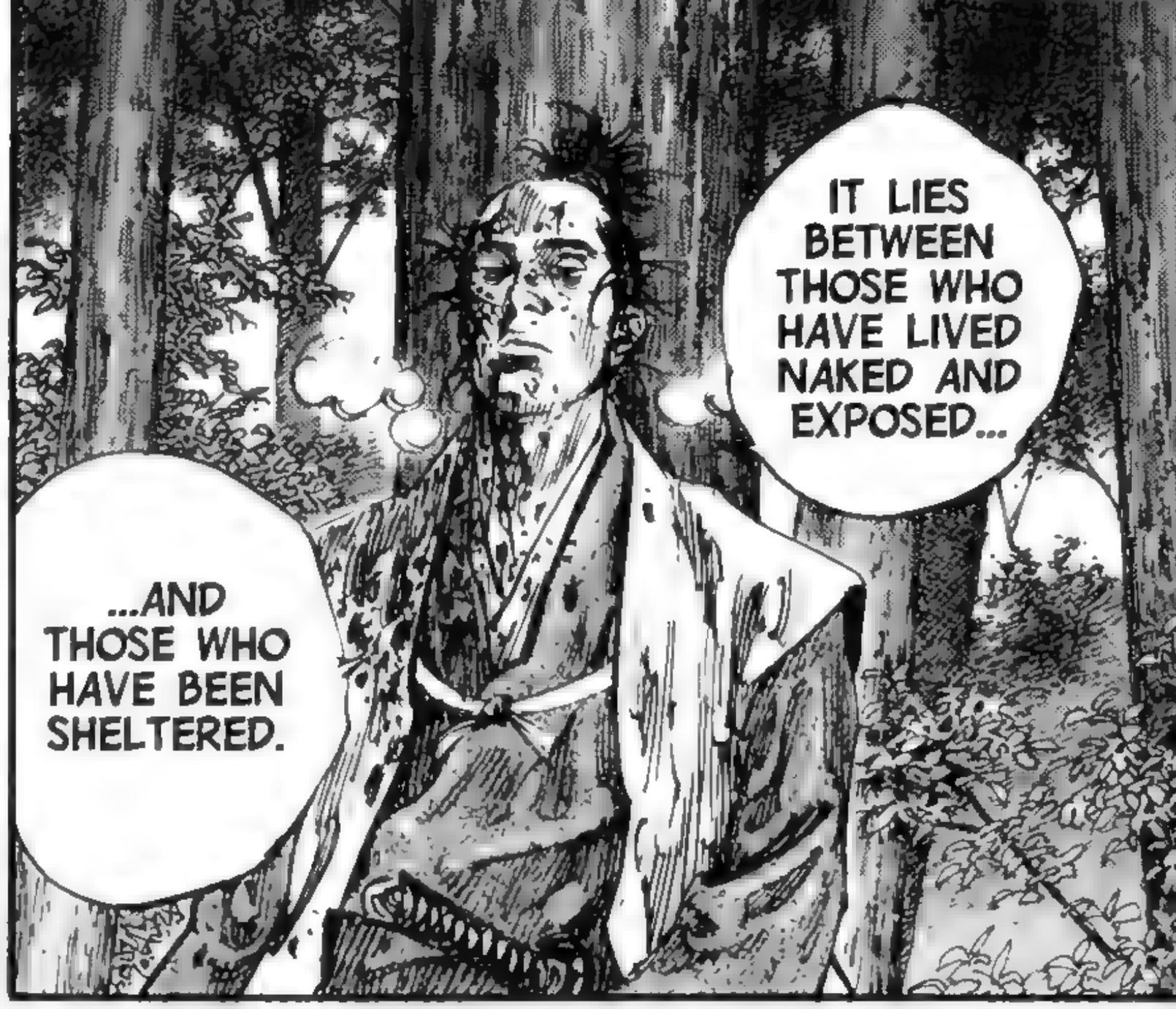
...WE ENTERED THE FRAY...

AFTER BEING PRODDED AND INTIMIDATED INTO FEAR...

WAA
ASH
!
SHLIP
PLISH
FWUD

HUF
HUF
FWO
SO
PLISH
HUF
HUF
UNGH!

FWOO
LOSE
THE DIFFERENCE IS IN ONE'S RESOLVE...
HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF



BETWEEN THOSE WHO ARE COMMITTED TO CLIMBING THE HIGHEST PEAK...

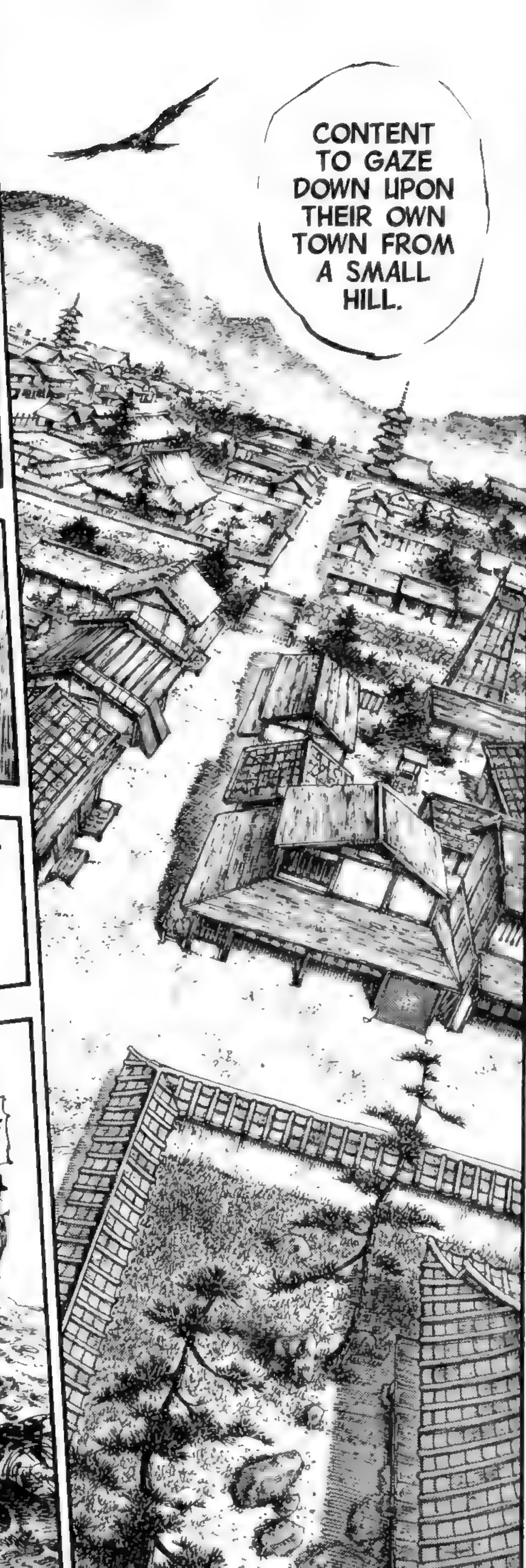
...AND THOSE WHO ARE CONTENT...

BASH

PLISH

HUF
HUF

HUF
HUF
HUF


CONTENT TO GAZE DOWN UPON THEIR OWN TOWN FROM A SMALL HILL.

HUF

THE TURBULENT TIMES AND BATTLES ARE COMING TO AN END AND THE SWORD IS LOSING ITS VALUE.

HUF

AND THIS IS ONLY THE BEGINNING.

WHY DID THIS MAN, AN ANACHRONISM REALLY, SUDDENLY PRESENT HIMSELF BEFORE US?

HUF

HUUUU

HUF

.....

HUF

I'VE PUT MUCH THOUGHT INTO THIS...

THE REPUTATION AND HONOR OF THE YOSHIOKA WAS FOUNDED UPON THE VALUE OF THE SWORD.

AND IN THESE CHANGING TIMES, THE YOSHIOKA IS BEING SAPPED OF THE VERY SPIRIT UPON WHICH IT WAS FOUNDED.

HUF

HUF

HUF

HUF

PERHAPS MASTER KEMPŌ SENT THAT MAN TO US...

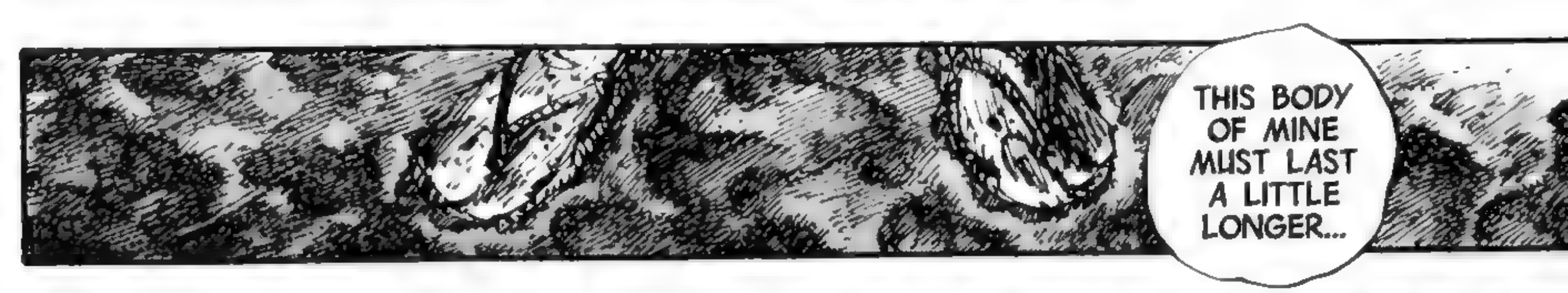
...TO TEAR US DOWN BEFORE THE YOSHIOKA LOSES EVERY LAST BIT OF ITS TRUE SPIRIT.

HUF
HUF
HAK
HUF
HUFF

WHICH MEANS...
I AM ALSO AMONGST THE SHELTERED AND PROTECTED...
FOR THAT, I DESERVE TO DIE.
...BUT I DIDN'T EXPECT HIM TO OVERCOME *THIS.*

HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF
I DIDN'T THINK I WAS UNDER-ESTIMATING THE POWER OF A SINGLE MAN...

I'VE ALWAYS THOUGHT OF YOU AS AN OLDER BROTHER.
UEDA...


THIS BODY OF MINE MUST LAST A LITTLE LONGER...

A FEW MOMENTS IS ALL I ASK FOR...
SHF

Vagabond

(HUF HUF HUF)

...HOW MANY TRULY COMMITTED THEMSELVES TO THIS FIGHT...?
IN CONFRONTING THIS MAN...

AND IN TURN THAT MAN WOULD LOOK AT THE MAN BY HIS SIDE.
WE LOWERED OUR EYES AND LOOKED AT THE MAN STANDING BY OUR SIDE.
WHEN THE ENEMY CAME BEFORE US, WE ALL REACTED IN THE SAME WAY.

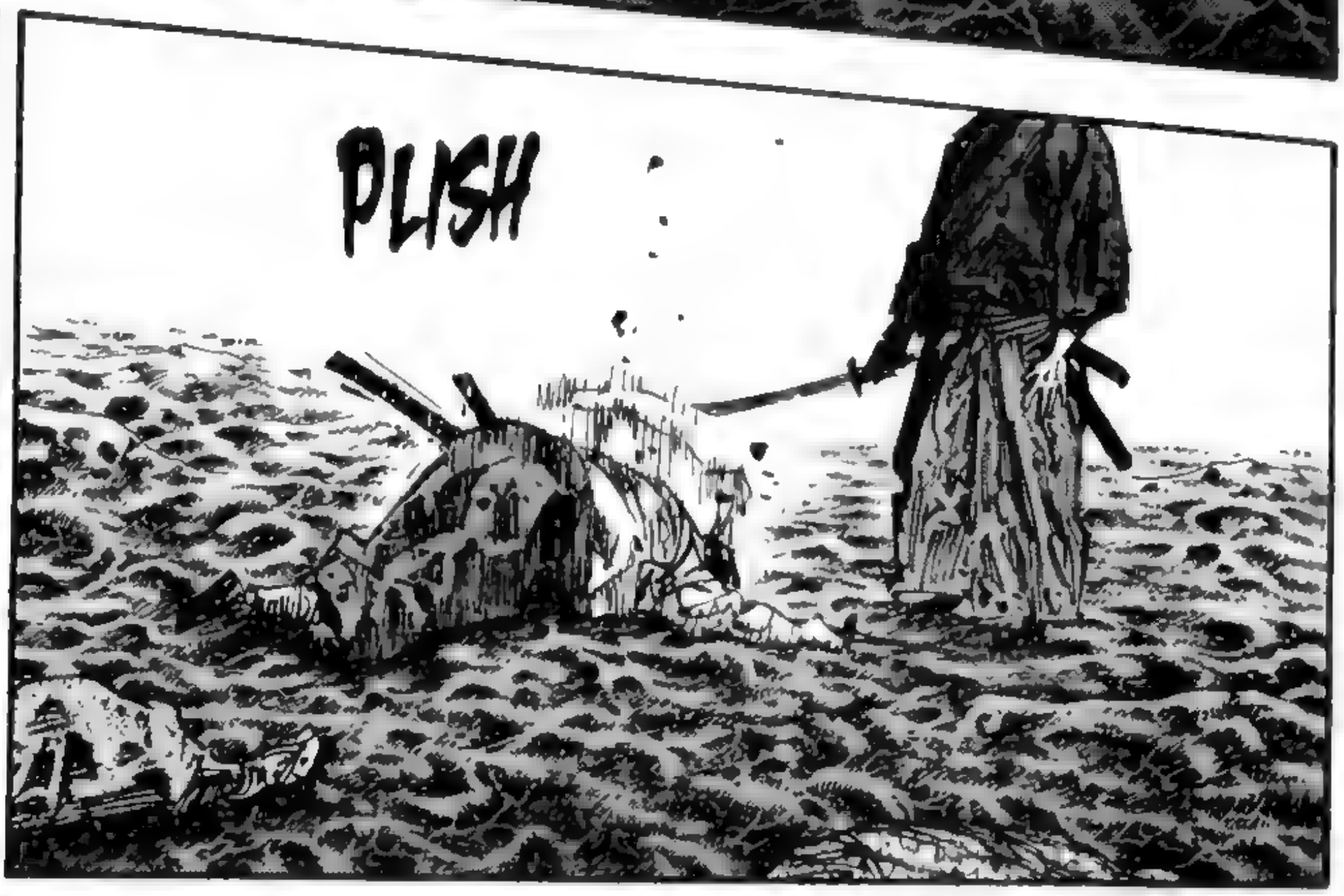
WE COM-PLETELY FAILED.
THAT'S WHAT IT CAME DOWN TO. THE MIGHTY YOSHIOKA...

WHAT DISHONOR ...!

HAK

UNGH
...
HAK

HUF
HUF
HUF


PLISH

HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF

#239

Blood-Stained Mud

HUF

.....
HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF

BUT I WAS UP AGAINST SEVENTY MEN.
HUF
HUF

HUF
HUF
MY MOVEMENTS BECAME QUITE AWKWARD NEAR THE END THERE...
AWFUL.
AS IF I'M A BEGINNER WHO'S NEVER HELD A SWORD BEFORE...
HUF

HUF
HUF
LOOK AT THIS...

I
SURVIVED...

HUF
HUF
HERE, I'LL RETURN THIS TO YOU.

TUGG
TUGG
HUF
HUF
TUGG

.....
HUF
PLIP
PLIP
HUF

HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF

BLEHH
PLSH
PLSH

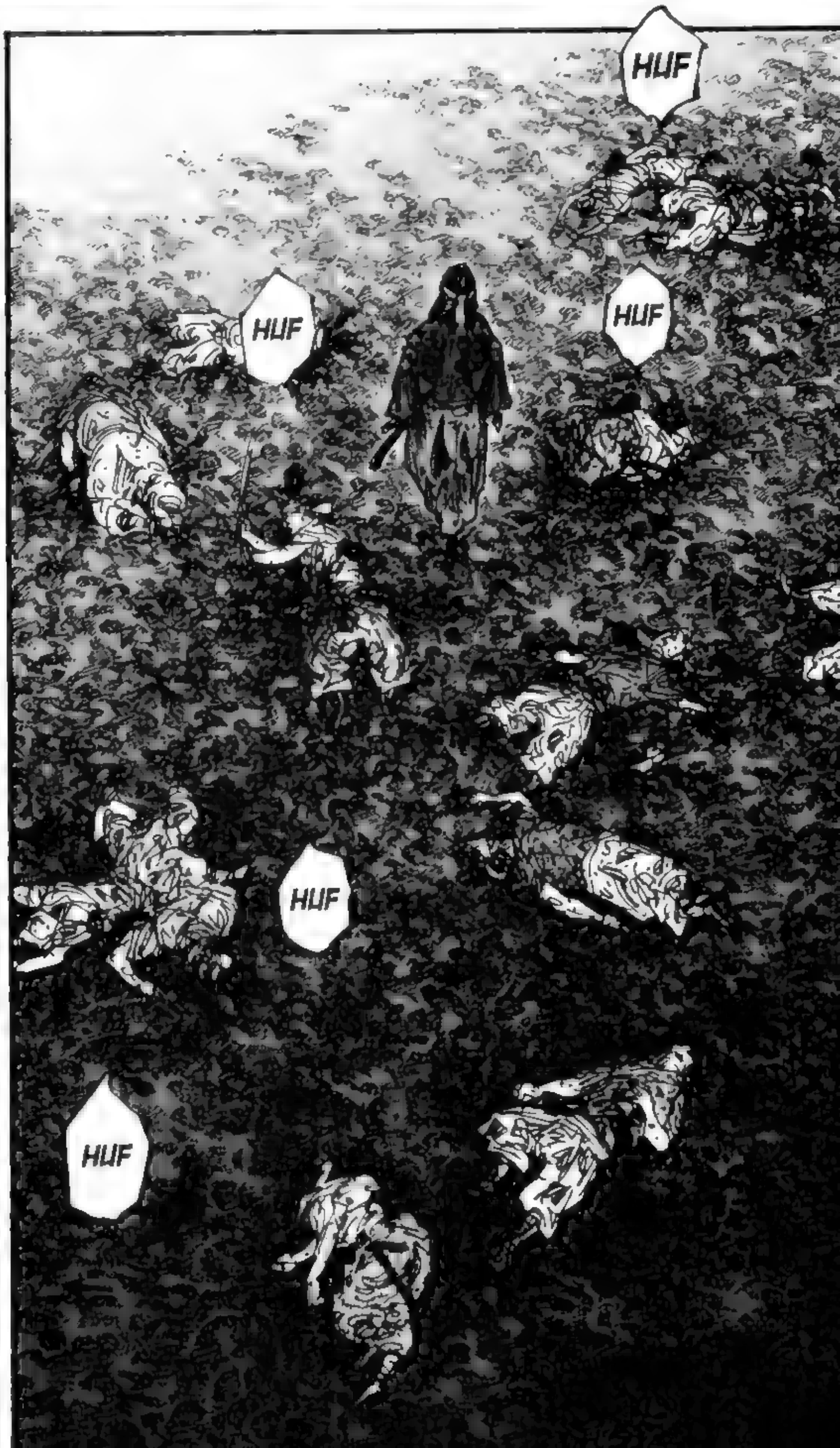
HUF
HUF
HUF

HAKK

URGH...
PLSH
PLSH

KŌETSU TOOK SUCH CARE WORKING ON IT.

WHERE IS IT?
MY SWORD...
HUF
HUF


HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF

.....

RSTL
HUF
HUF

RSTL

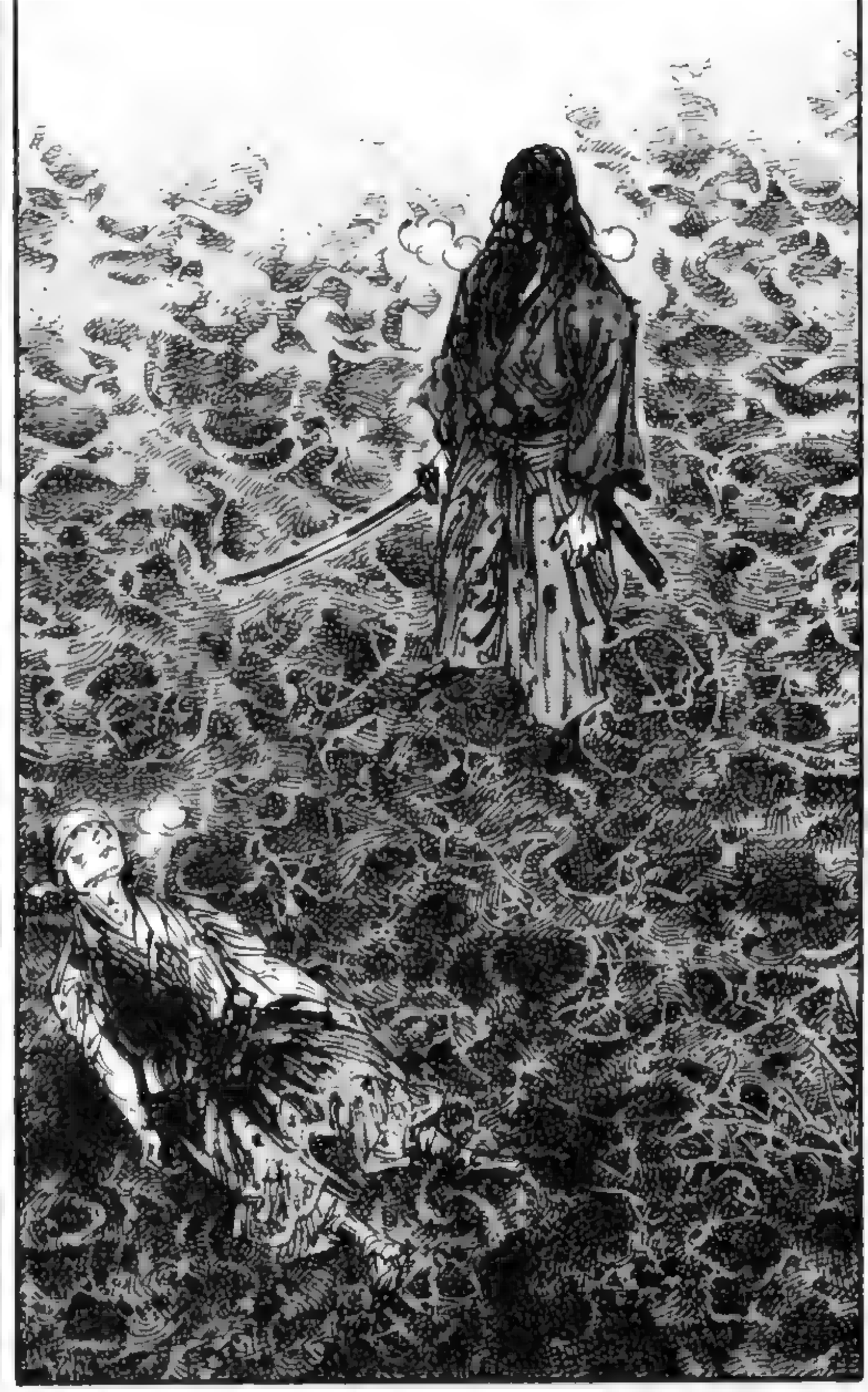
FLMP

HEY...

HUF
HUF
THIS ISN'T IT.

!
...?!
PLEASE ...
...FINISH ME OFF...
...KILL ME...

.....
HUF
HUF

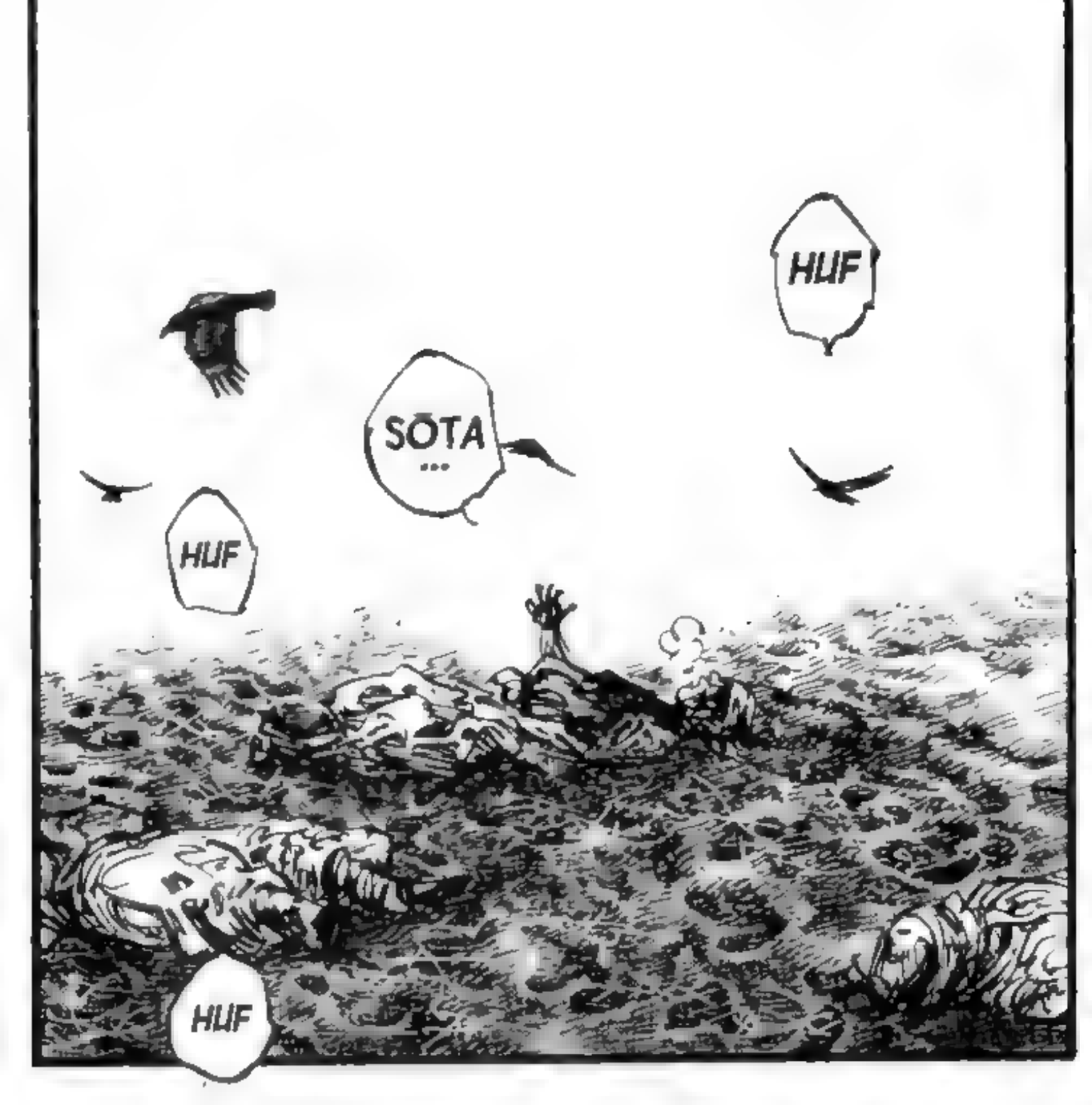


...
HUF
HUF

HUF
CURSE YOU...
HUF

...
HUF
HUF
SŌTA...

HUF
HUF
HUF
MY SPIRIT WILL REMAIN TO PUT A CURSE ON YOU...
HUF


HUF
SŌTA ...
HUF
HUF

SŌTA ...

SŌTA ...

TO YOUR FATHER ...
COME ...

PLEASE ...

HUF
HUF
THWAK

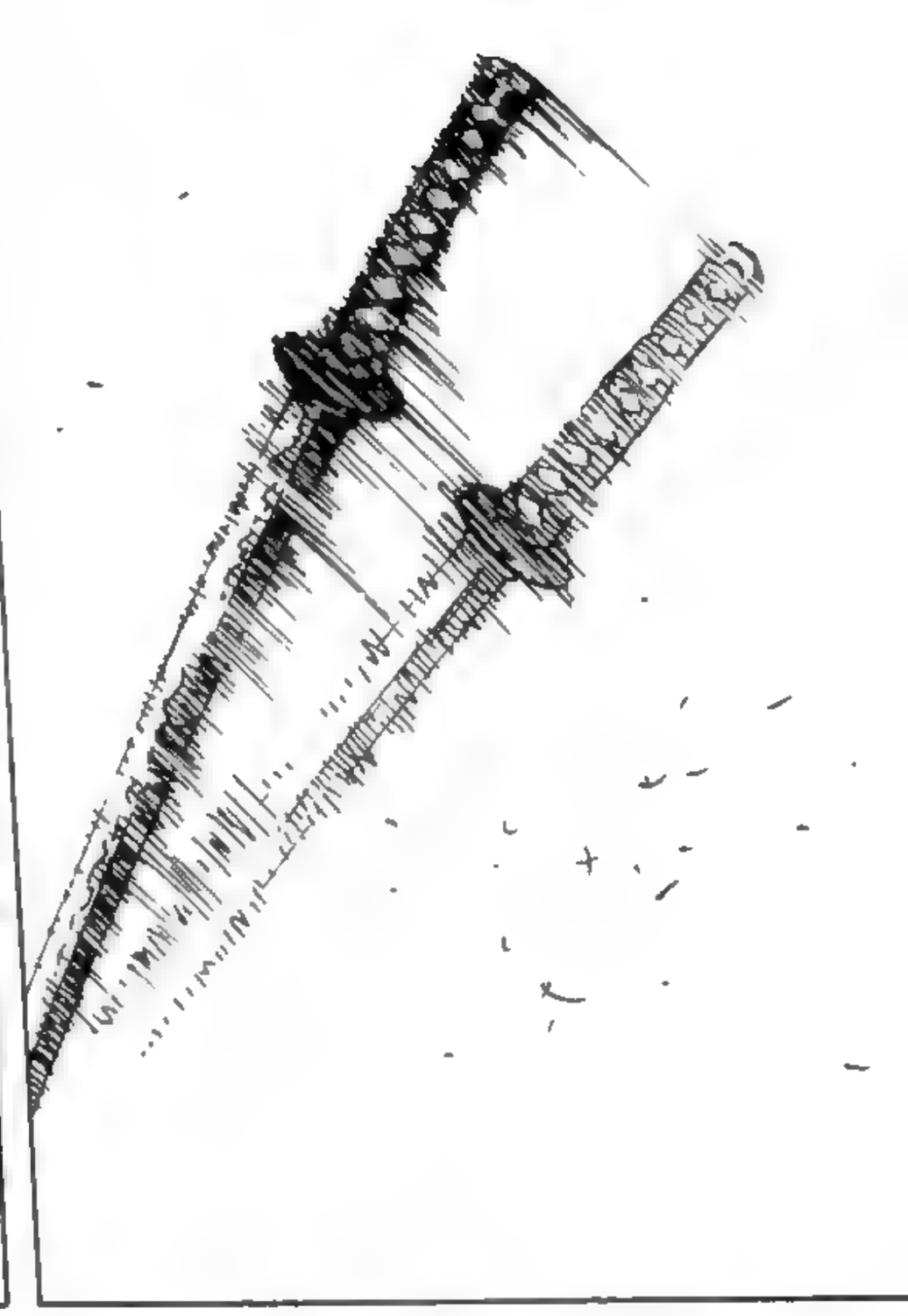
FINISH ME OFF...
HUF
...KILL ME.
HUF
HUF
HUF

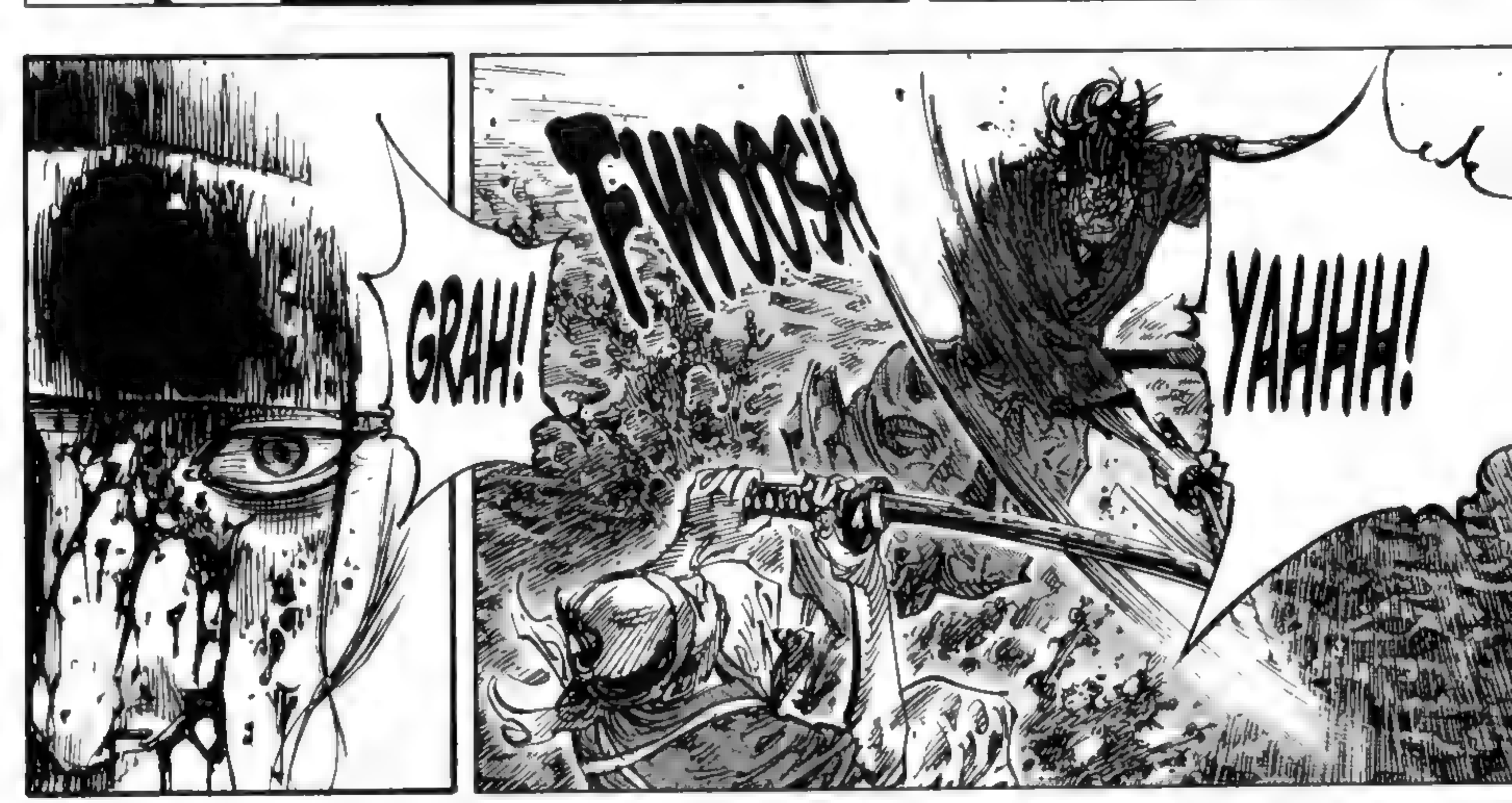
HUF
HUF
HUF

KLANG

HUF
HUF

KŌETSU...




GRAH!
FWOOSH
YAHHH!

HUF
HUF

I AM ONLY INTERESTED...

HUF
HUF

...IN SHARPENING FOR THE PURPOSES OF SUCH BEAUTY.
ONLY FOR THE PURPOSES OF SUCH BEAUTY...
IT'S GOT NOTHING TO DO WITH BEAU--

BUT I'VE LOOKED LONG ENOUGH.
STILL CAN'T FIND MY SHORT SWORD.

HUF
HUF
THERE IT IS!

I'M GOING TO LEAVE KYOTO.

UNGH ...
HUF
HUF
HUF

OW...

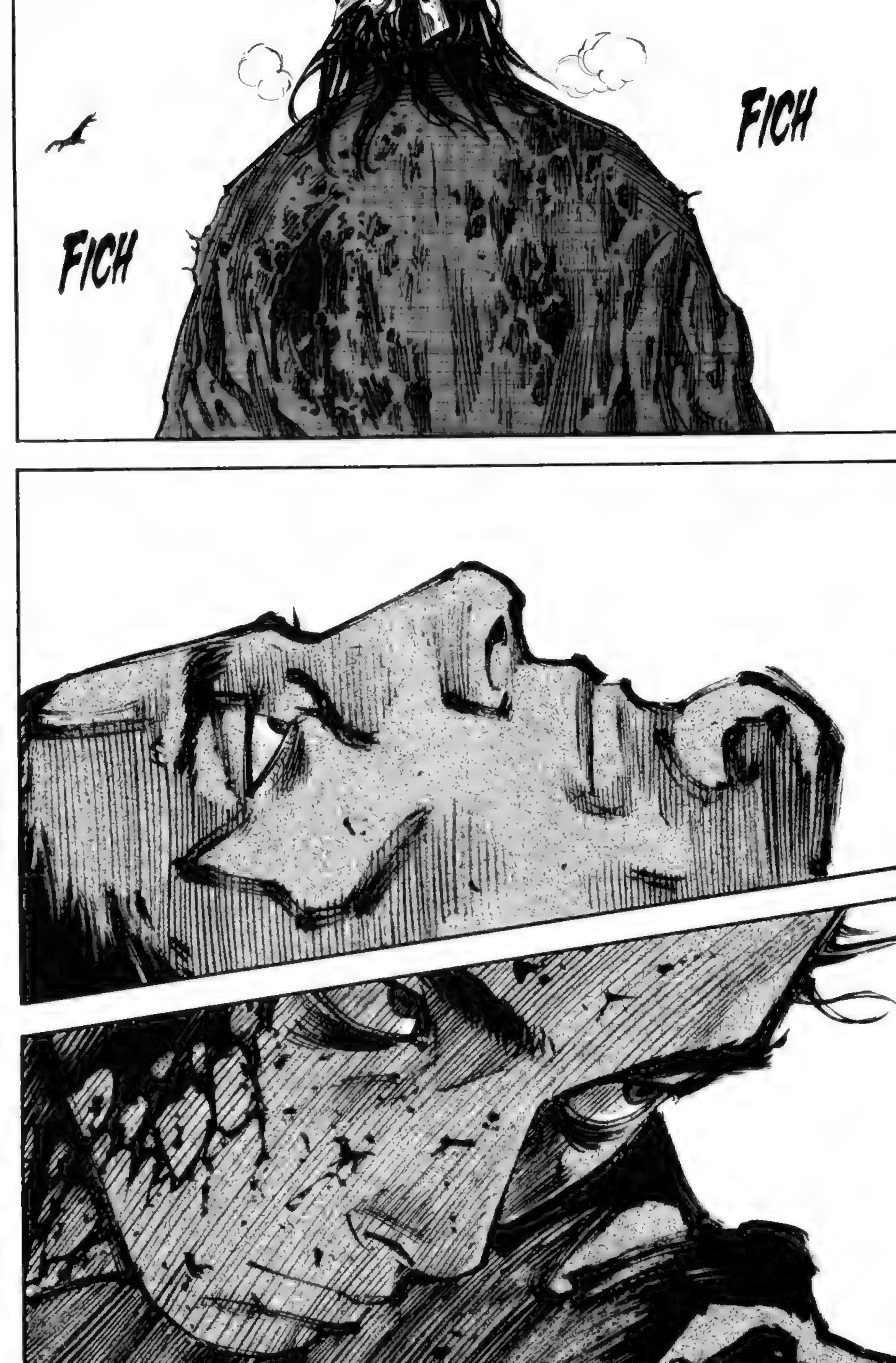
ZING
NNGH ...

ONLY NOW AM I STARTING TO FEEL THE PAIN...
URRGH.
HUF
PLISH
FICH
HUF
HUF

PAIN...
HUF
HUF
HUF

HUF
HUF

DAMN IT.
GRMBLE GRMBLE ...
HUF
HUF


FICH
FICH

Vagabond

(DRIP)
ぺ
ろ
り

HUF

FICH

PAIN...

I'M JUST STARTING TO FEEL IT...

HUF

...THROUGH-OUT MY ENTIRE BODY...

HUF

HUF

FICH

DAMN IT.

HUF

...THERE IT IS.

HUF

HUF

MY SWORD...

HUF
HUF

...YOU KILLED THEM.

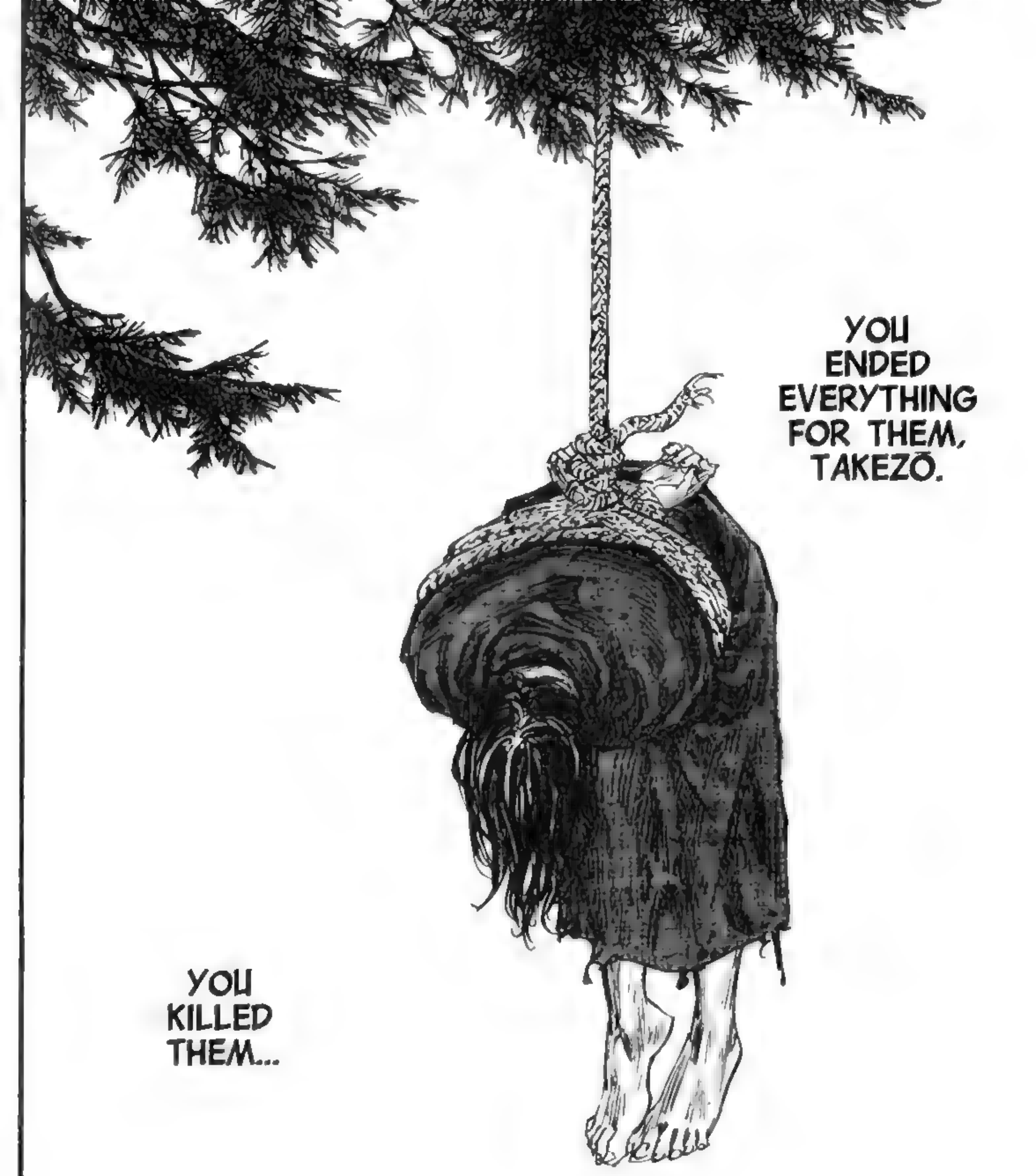
NAMU AMIDA BUTSU ...
NAMU AMIDA BUTSU ...

HUF
HUF

HUF
NAMU AMIDA BUTSU... NAMU AMIDA BUTSU...
HUF

OTHERS HAVE NO AMBITION AT ALL...
SOME PEOPLE HAVE HIGH HOPES AND GREAT DREAMS.
SOME HAVE PETS.
SOME ARE ENGAGED.
SOME HAVE YOUNG CHILDREN.
SOME ARE ALONE IN THIS WORLD.
SOME PEOPLE HAVE FAMILIES.

EVERYONE IS BORN INTO THIS WORLD... AND THEY GROW UP.
WHETHER THAT LIFE WAS BLESSED OR NOT...
EACH AND EVERY PERSON YOU KILLED HAD HIS OWN LIFE.



#240

An Auspicious Encounter

HUF

HUF

HUF
HUF

HUF
HUF
HUF

HUF
HUF
HUF

HUF
HUF

HUF
HUF

НУШШ...

НШF
НШF

.....
НУUUU
KAHH

MY SWORD...

HUF

HUF

THWSH

"ONE SWORD"...
AND IT LITERALLY COMES DOWN TO THIS...
MY LAST SPARK OF LIFE--

KCHK
...

ARGH
...

HUFF...
...

IT'S ALL PART OF TRAINING.
MASTER, YOU DIDN'T HAVE TO...
SOME THINGS YOU CANNOT GAIN FROM MERE PRACTICE ALONE.
YOU MUST STOP THIS SORT OF THING.

YOU WON'T DIE.

THRB
THRB

GO SPREAD THE WORD ABOUT US NOW.

WELL, EVERYONE WILL NOW KNOW WHO DID THIS TO YOU.

I'VE HEARD YOU'VE BEEN SULLYING THE NAME OF MY SCHOOL.

ICHIJŌJI ...

OVER 30 YEARS AGO...

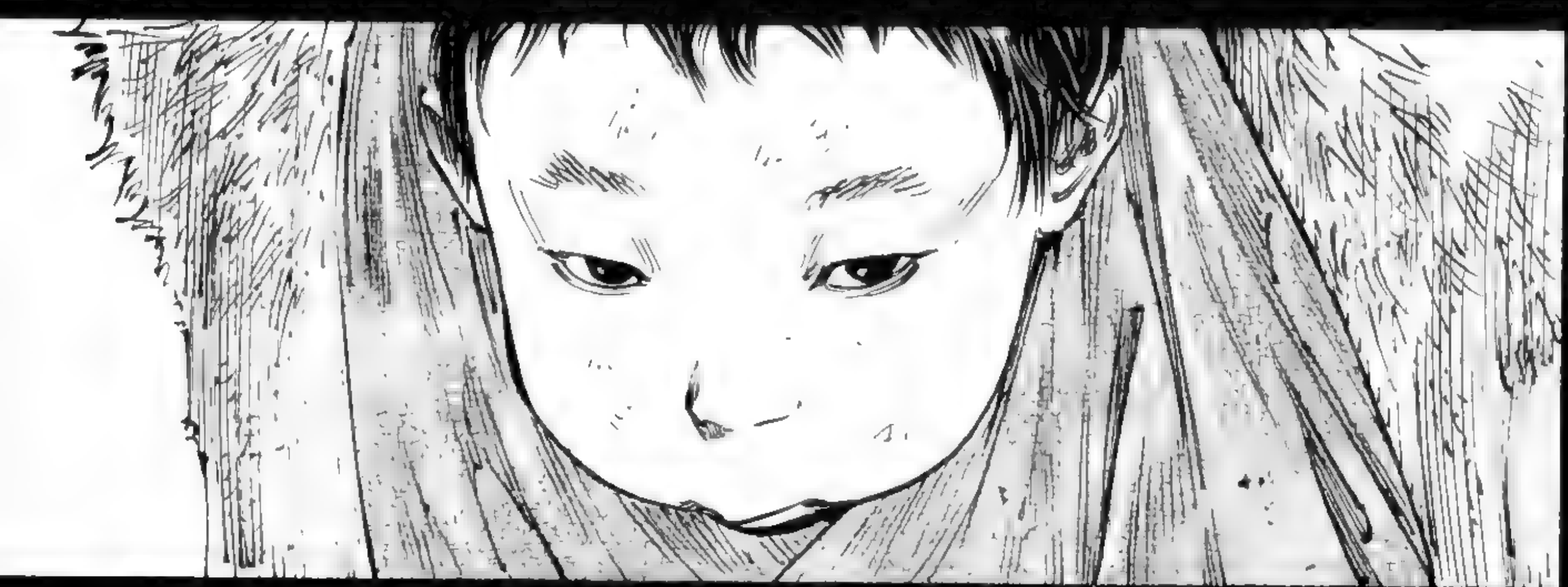
NEAR THE SPREADING PINE...

DRGG

DRGG

COULD THIS BE WHAT THAT FORTUNE-TELLER WAS REFERRING TO?

"YOU SHALL HAVE AN AUSPICIOUS ENCOUNTER" ...



WHAT COULD BE MORE IMPORTANT THAN RAISING A CHILD!

"CIRCUMSTANCES HAVE PREVENTED ME FROM RAISING THIS CHILD."

SAYS HERE HIS NAME IS RYŌHEI.

HM?

WHAT DO YOU SAY?

EH, RYŌHEI?

HOW COULD YOU ABANDON A CHILD YOU NAMED?

BWAHH!

HM...

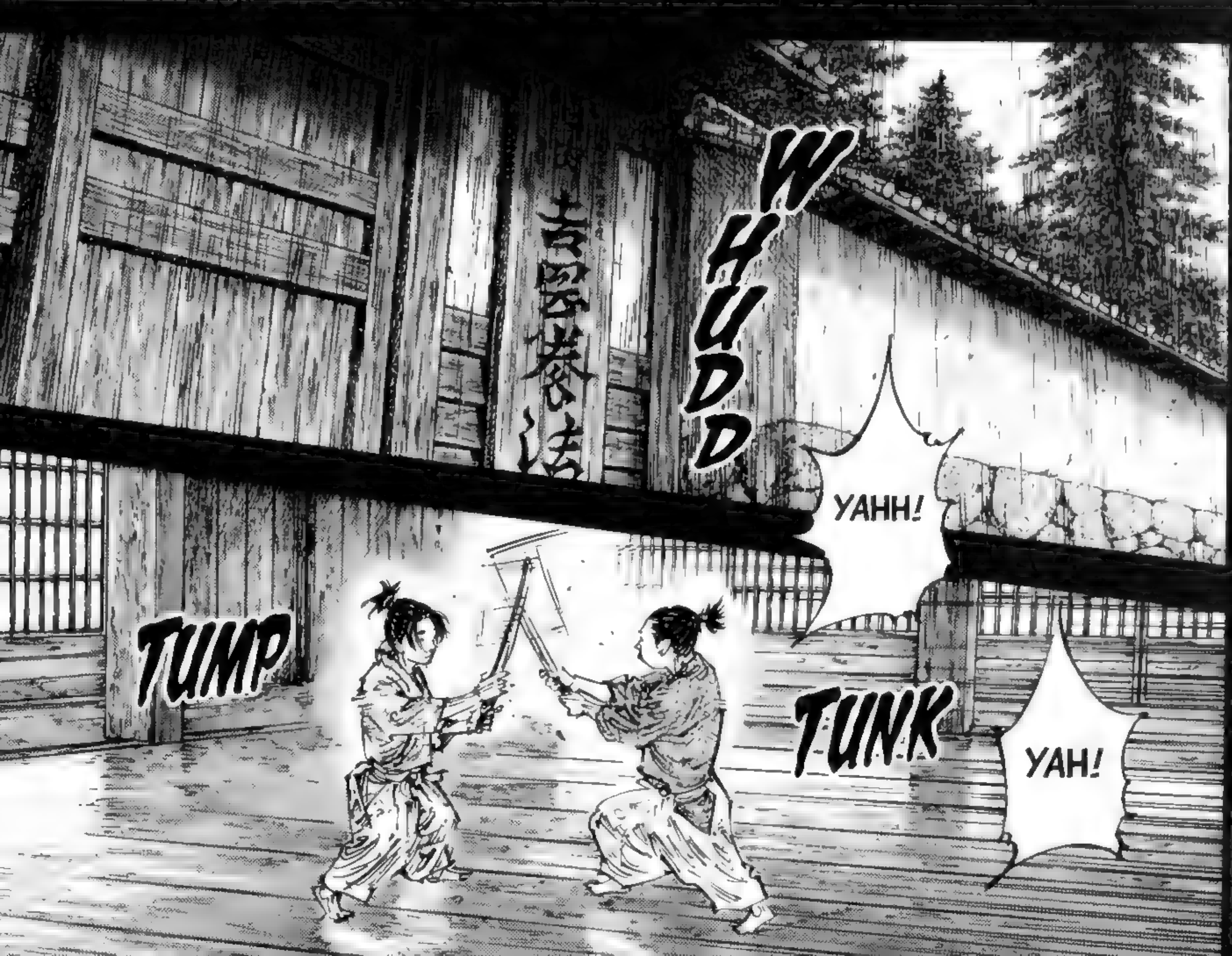
BA...

BA...

HEDA!
YES?

GOOD.
BWAHHH!
CRY YOUR HEART OUT!
YES, CRY ALL YOU WANT.

RAISE THIS CHILD AS YOUR OWN!


吉岡拳心法
WHUD
YAHH!
TUMP
TUNK
YAH!

HUF
.....
HUF
HUF

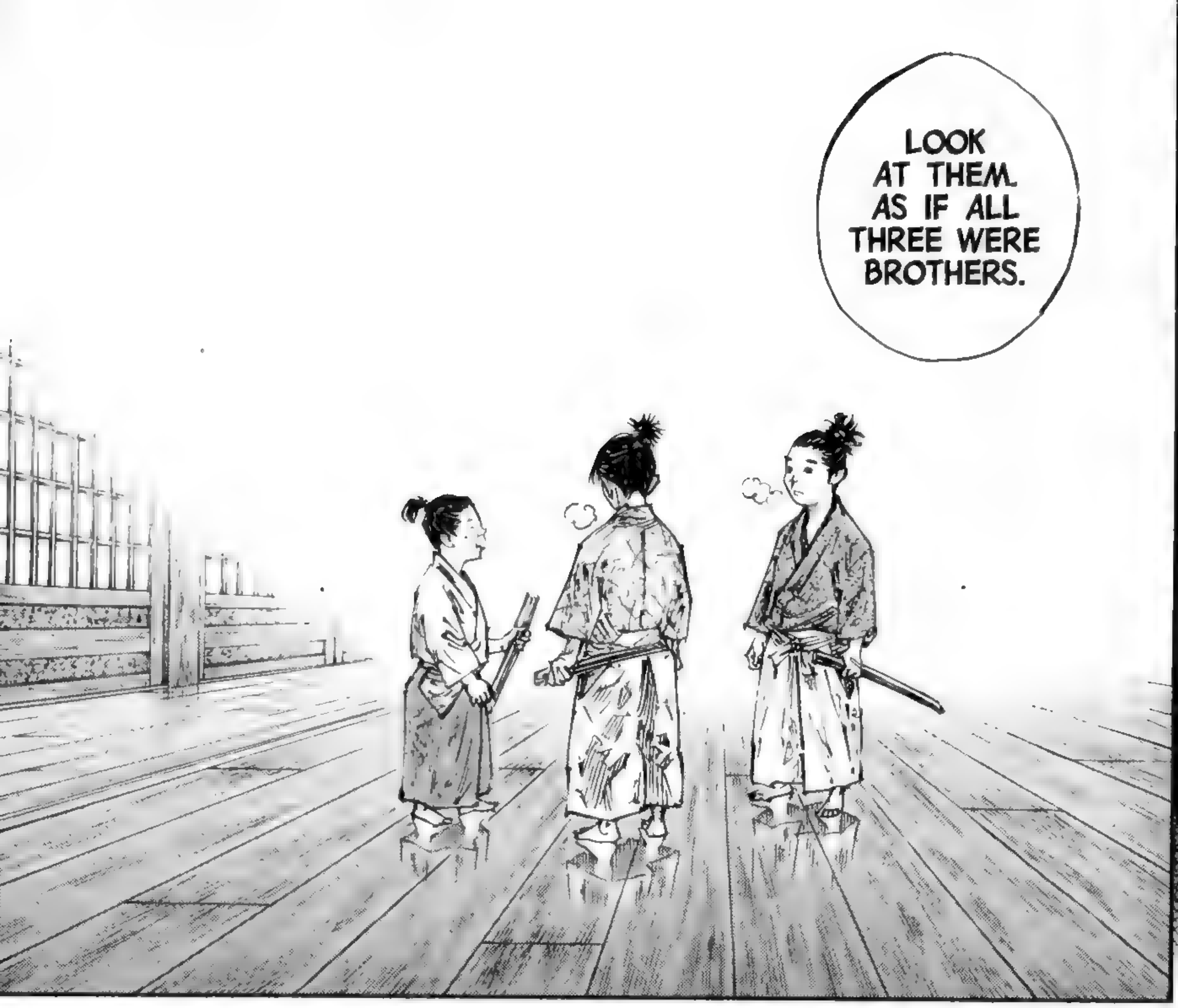
.....
HUF
HUF
HUF

HE HOLDS HIS OWN AGAINST YOUNG MASTER SEIJŪRŌ.

RYŌHEI'S SHOWING GOOD PROGRESS ...
STOP!
THAT'S IT!

AN AUSPICIOUS ENCOUNTER INDEED...

HE HAS INNATE SKILL.


LOOK AT THEM. AS IF ALL THREE WERE BROTHERS.

Vagabond

(HUF HUF HUF)

#241 One Sword

THEY LOOK LIKE BROTHERS.

ONE DAY...

THAT'S RIGHT, DENSHI-CHIRŌ.

KLAK

KLAK

MOVE FOR-WARD.

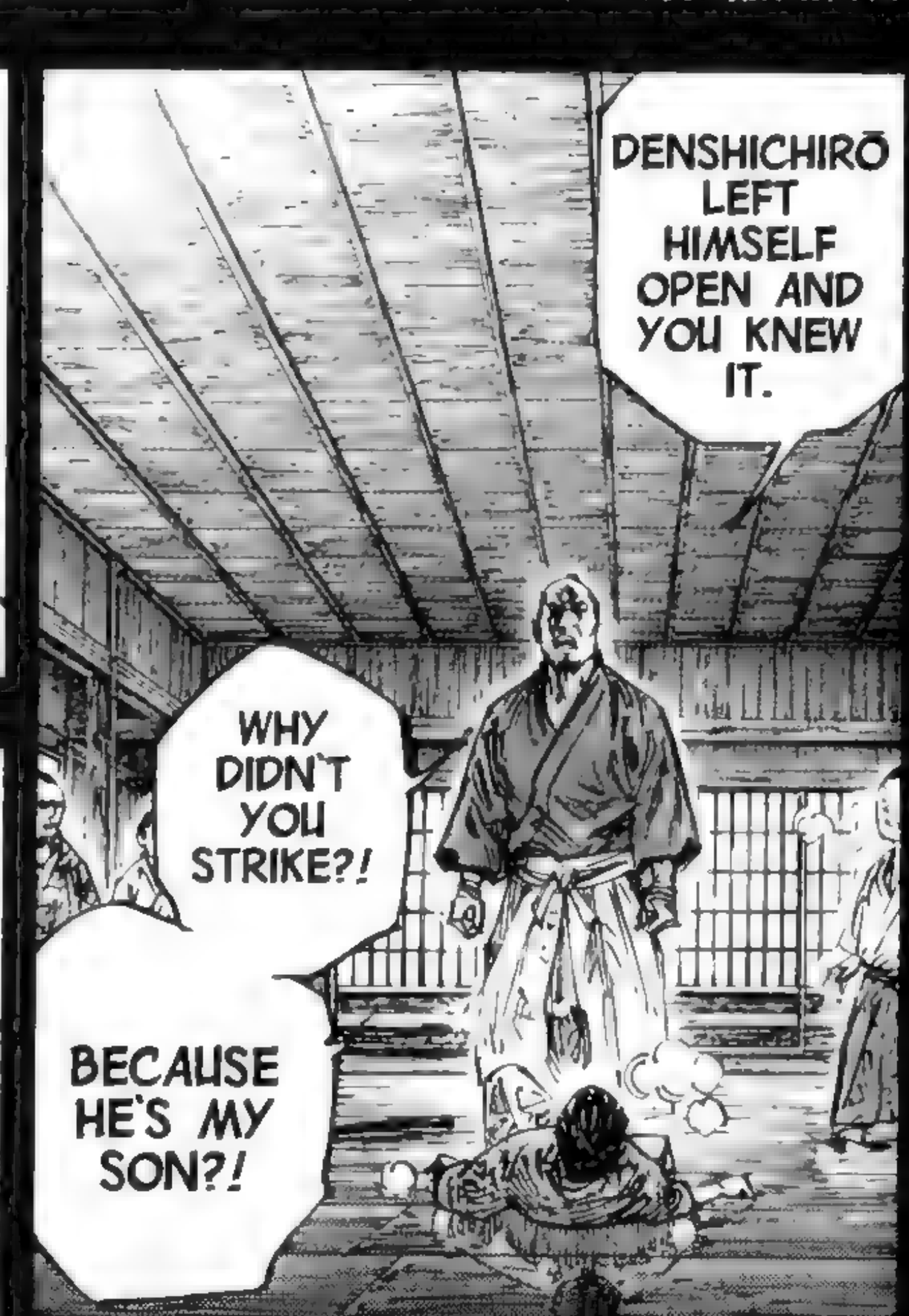
.....

RYŌHEI!

STOP!

SWAK
!!

.....


DENSHICHIRŌ LEFT HIMSELF OPEN AND YOU KNEW IT.
WHY DIDN'T YOU STRIKE?!
BECAUSE HE'S MY SON?!

THIS IS THE THIRD TIME I'VE HAD TO WARN YOU, RYŌHEI.

IT WILL WARP HIS SENSE OF WINNING AND LOSING.

HOLDING BACK LIKE THAT CAN ONLY BE DETRIMENTAL FOR DENSHICHIRŌ.

NOW STAND UP.

WOULD ANY OPPONENT SHOW DEFERENCE IN A REAL SWORD-FIGHT?

THAT'S THE MEANING OF *HITOTSU NO TACHI*-- ONE SWORD! A SINGLE STROKE!

THUNK

YOU MUST LEAVE, RYŌHEI.

...!

BZZZ

ZWRR
ZWRR

RYŌHEI...

I HAVE NOWHERE ELSE TO GO.

AND THE ONLY WAY I KNOW IS...

I WANT A LIFE.

...THAT OF THE SWORD.

...!
SHWP
...

FORGIVE ME, SIR.

PLEASE LET ME FIGHT YOU.

I WILL GIVE EVERYTHING I HAVE. KILLING ME WILL TAKE NO EFFORT AT ALL...

BUT AT LEAST...

AT LEAST I CAN TRY TO CORRECT THE DAMAGE I'VE DONE. I CAN SHOW DENSHICHIRŌ WHAT IT MEANS TO FIGHT HONORABLY.

I BESEECH YOU, SIR.

!

FWAP

ZWP

FWAK

HERE!

NOW!

FWAK

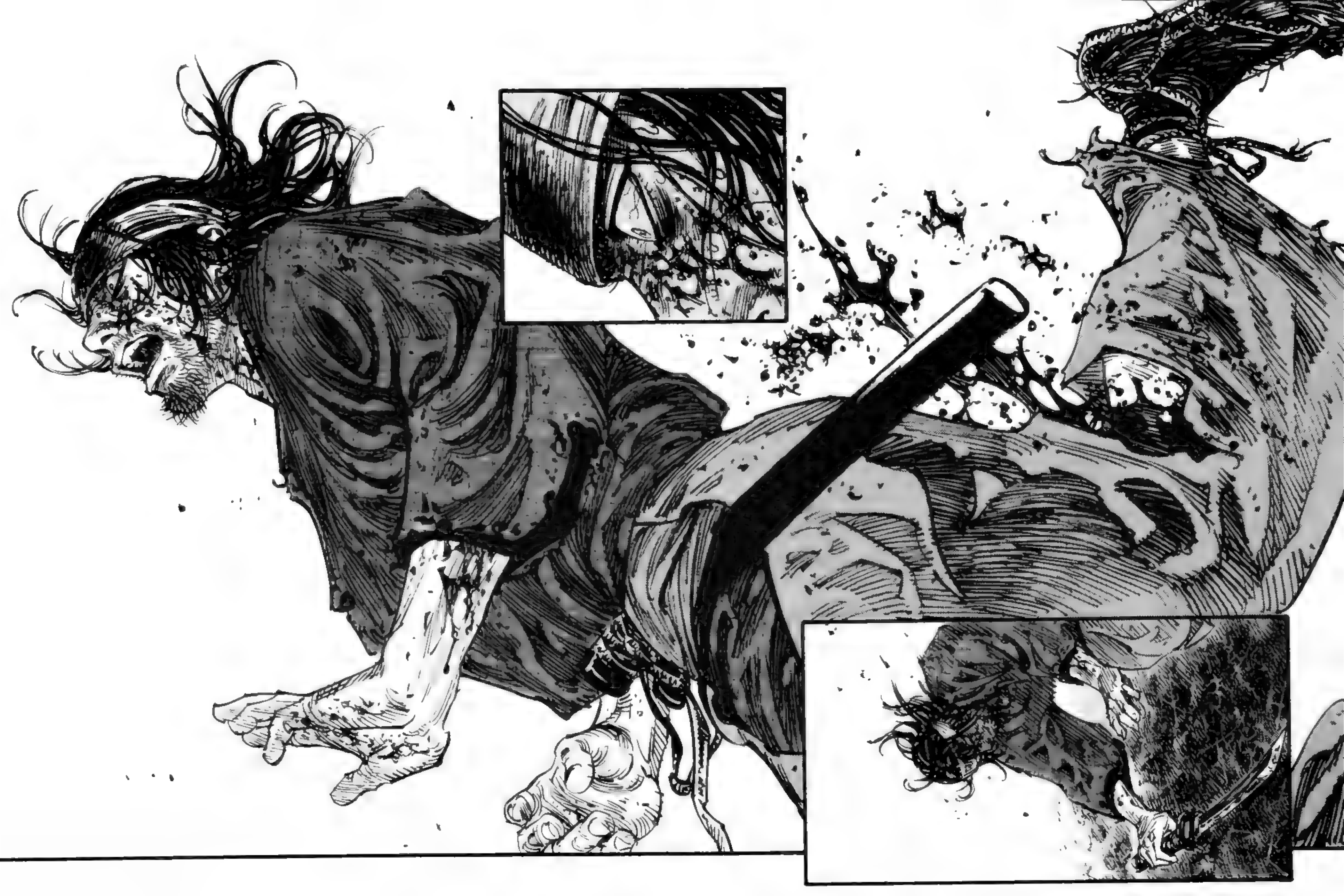
ONE SWORD!

THERE ARE NO SECOND CHANCES !!

FICH

NOW GO TAKE A BATH AND GET WARMED UP.

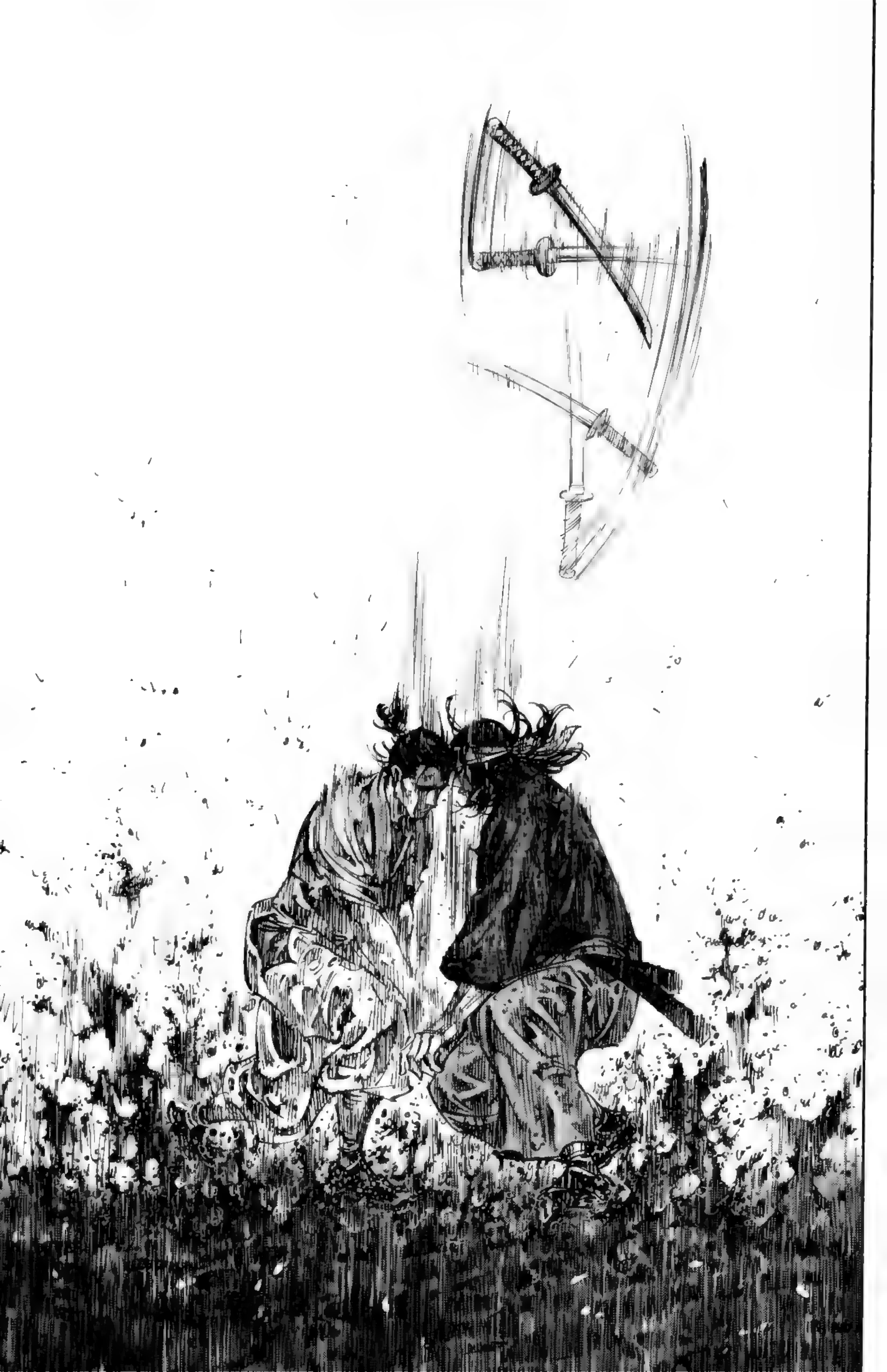
THWAK
A SINGLE STROKE...
ONE SWORD ...

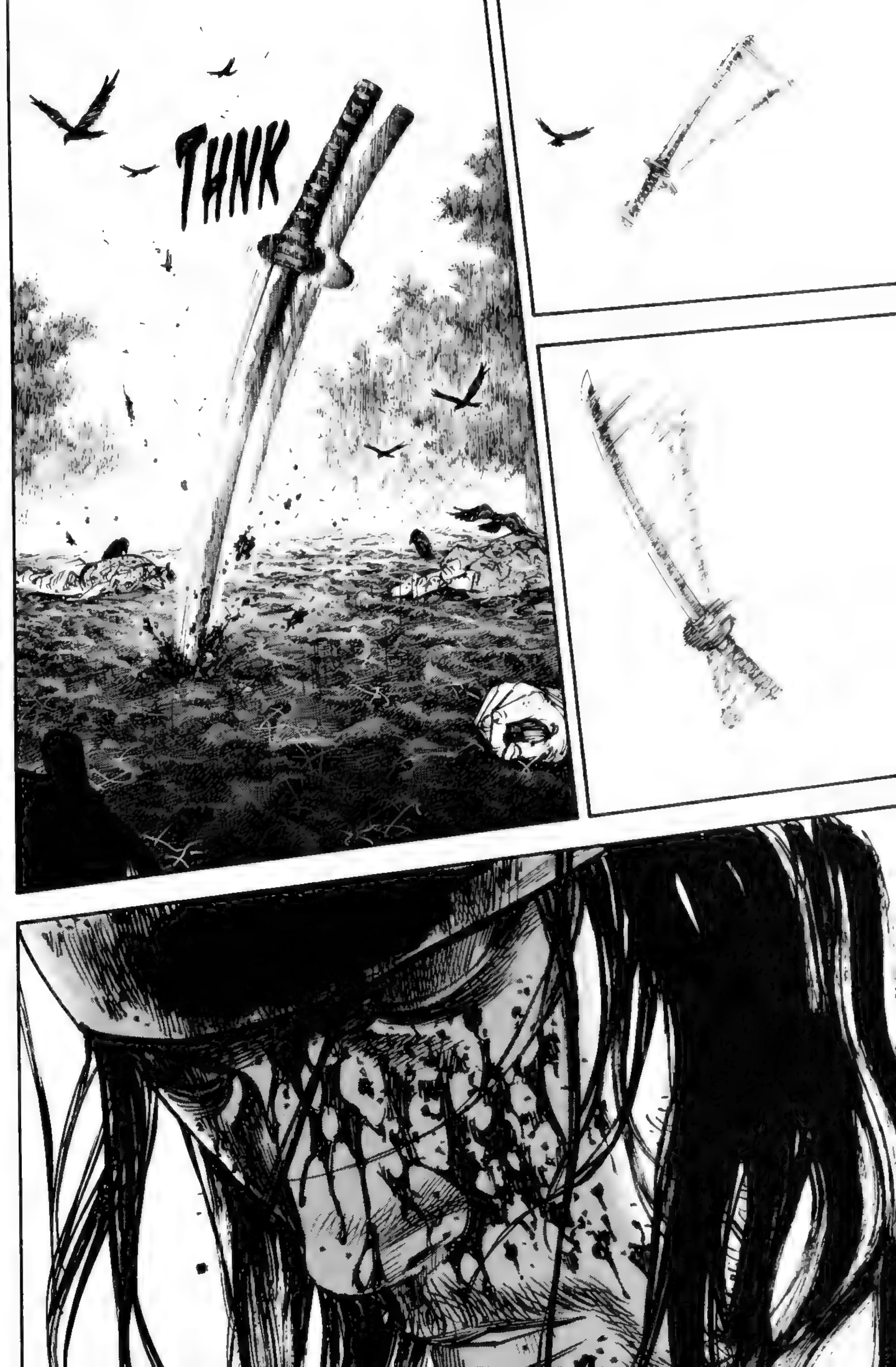


NO...

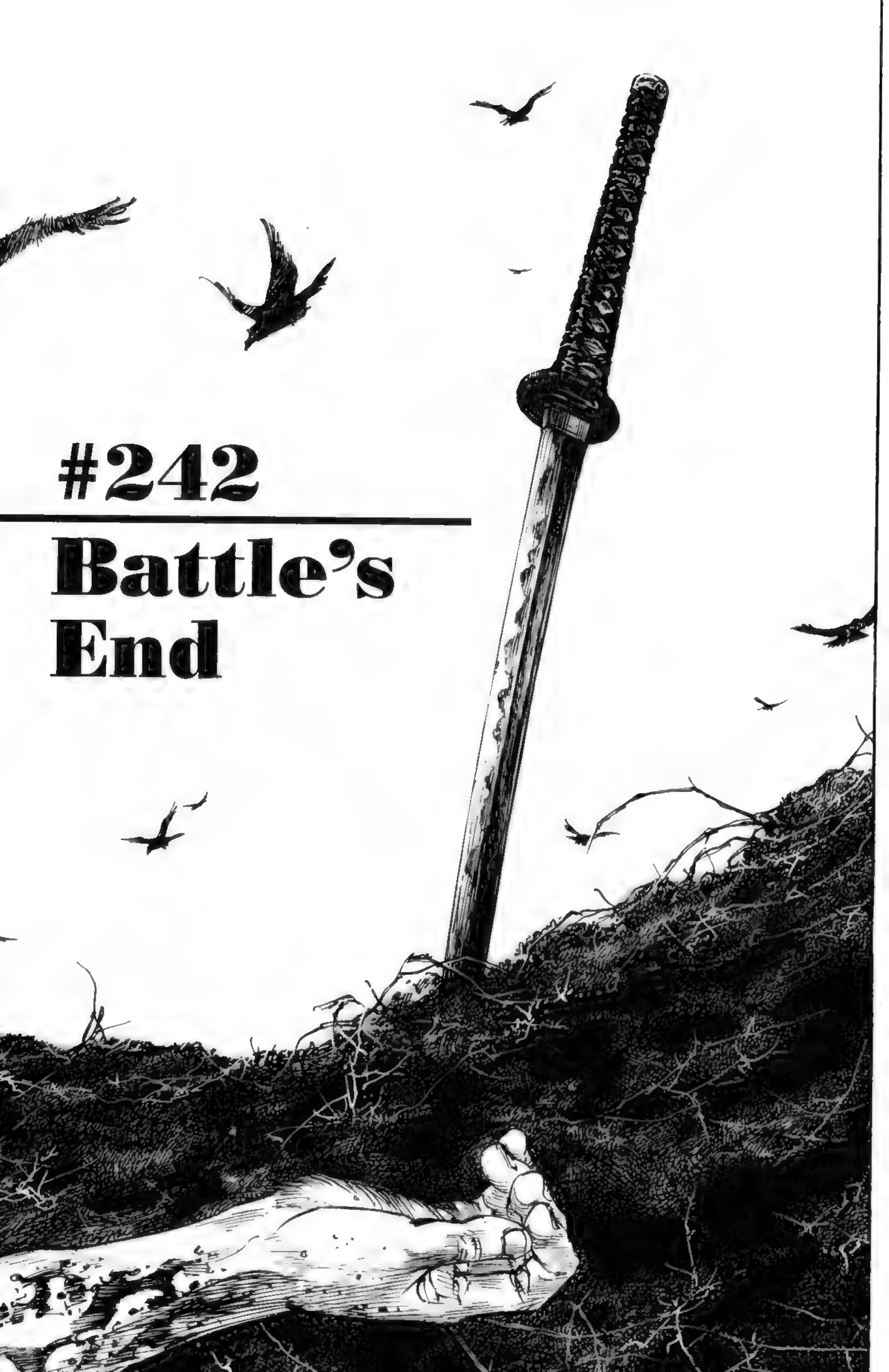
...SECOND CHANCES...

UWOH!
KLAK




THNK

Vagabond



#242

Battle's End

HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF

HOW WERE WE?

TELL ME, MUSASHI.

...HOW DID WE APPEAR?

FROM YOUR PERSPECTIVE ...

MUSASHI ...

BUT PEOPLE ARE WEAK.
WE BAND TOGETHER AND WE FORGET OUR TRUE INTENTIONS...
WE LOSE OURSELVES IN A GROUP.

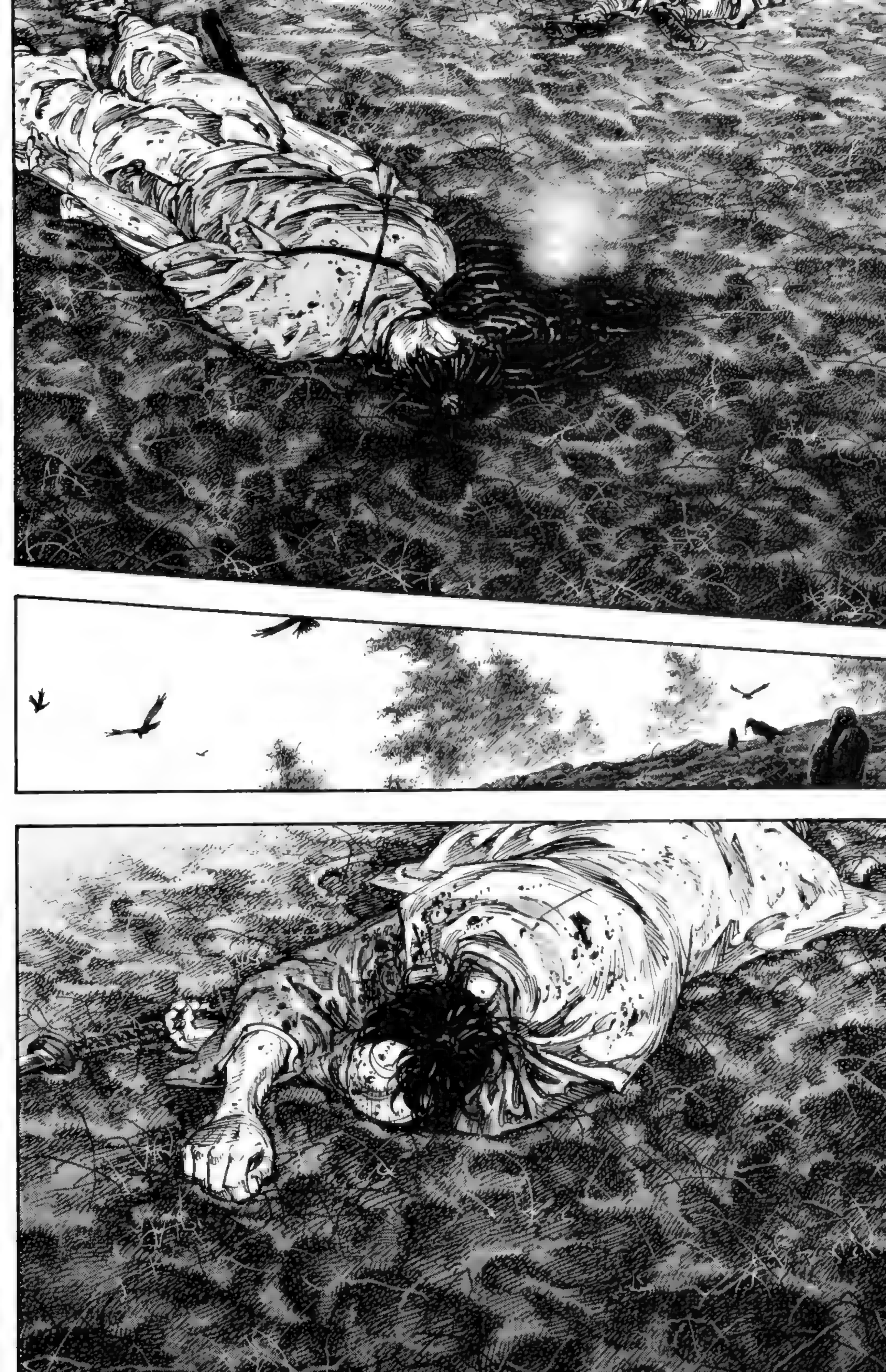
THEN THE YOSHIOKA WOULD NOT HAVE FALTERED.

WE COULD HAVE BEEN RIVALS ON GOOD TERMS.

IF ONLY THINGS HAD BEEN DIFFERENT ...
HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF

..I BELIEVE THAT YOU HAVE REACHED IT.

WHATEVER IT WAS THAT WE WERE ALL STRIVING TO ACHIEVE...



HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF

HUF
UNGH...
HUF
ARRGH...
HUF
HUF
HUF

HUF
HUF
HUF

HUF
KCHK
HUF
HUF

HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF
WHAT *IS* THIS...?

MUST LEAVE.

HUF

HUF

HUF

HUF

HUF

HUF

HAVE TO GET OUT OF HERE.

FCH

FCH

HUF

GRB

HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF

HUF

HUF

FCH

HUF

HUF

FCH

HUF

F

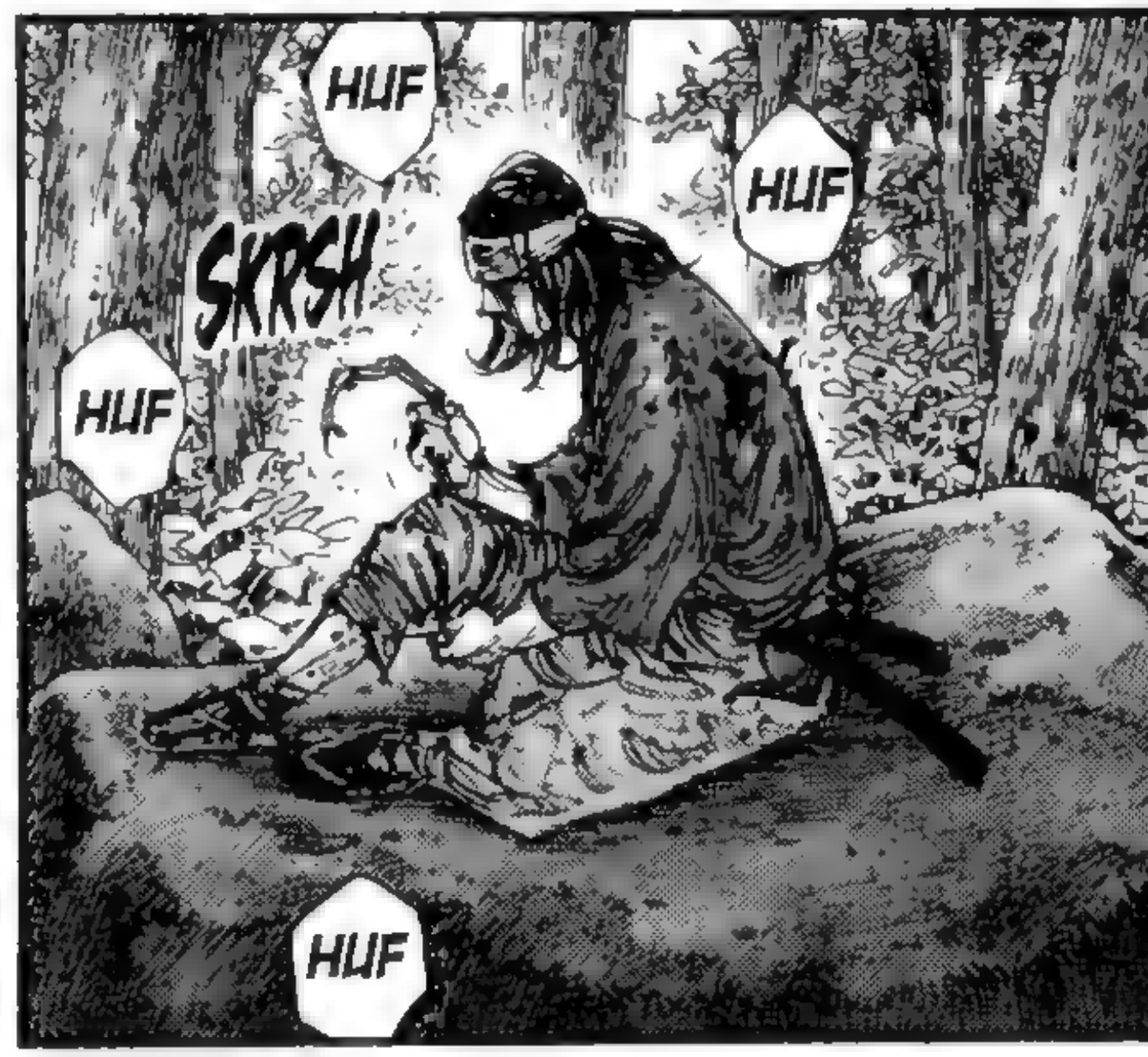
S

S

H

H

HUF
HUF
HUF
FSSSH



TAKEZŌ...

FSSSSH

H

H

H

KRIK
ICHIJŌJI ...?
NGHH!
YOU SAW WHAT HAPPENED ?

WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?
WATCH YOUR FOOTING. IT'S SLIPPERY.
...?
I'VE BEEN FOLLOWING YOU FROM ICHIJŌJI.

...
HUF
HUF

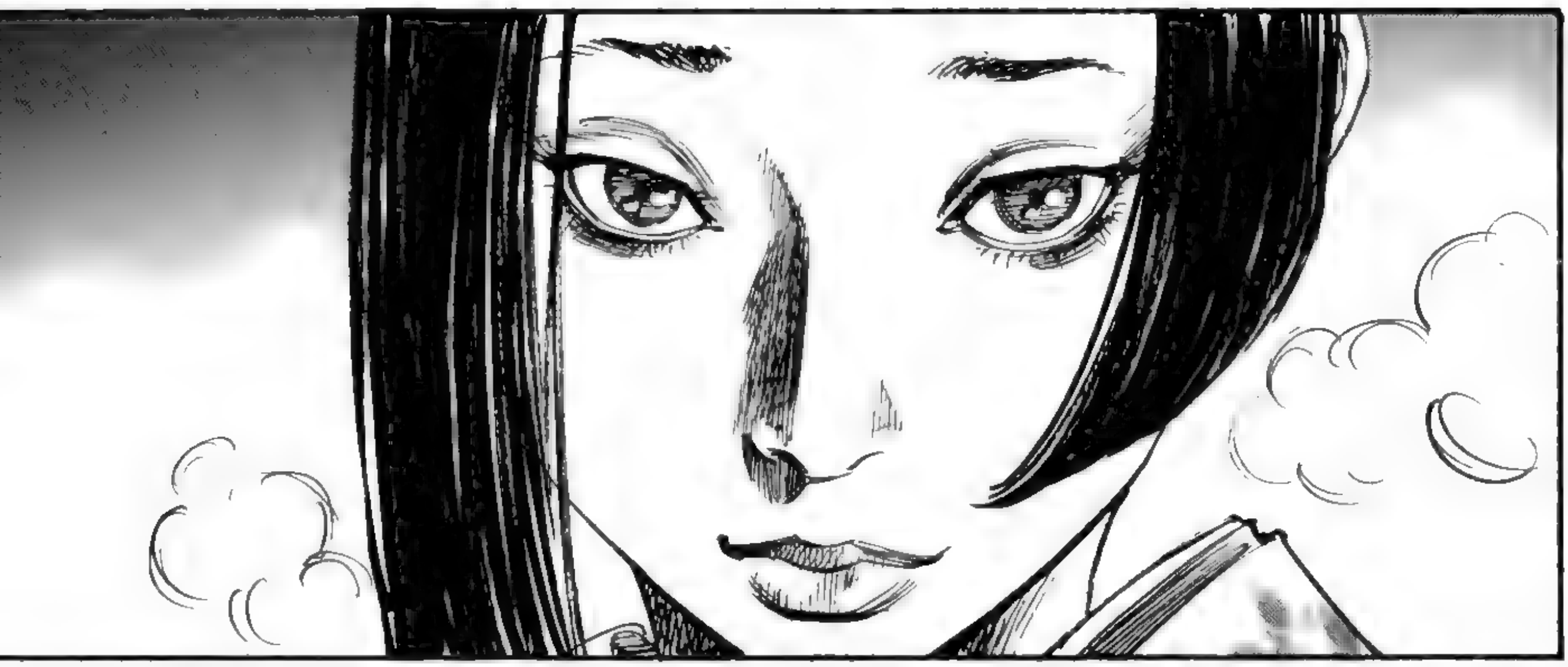
...I'M A VAGA-BOND.

FROM THIS DAY ON...

YOU SHOULD HAVE...
FSSHH

YOU STAY HERE.

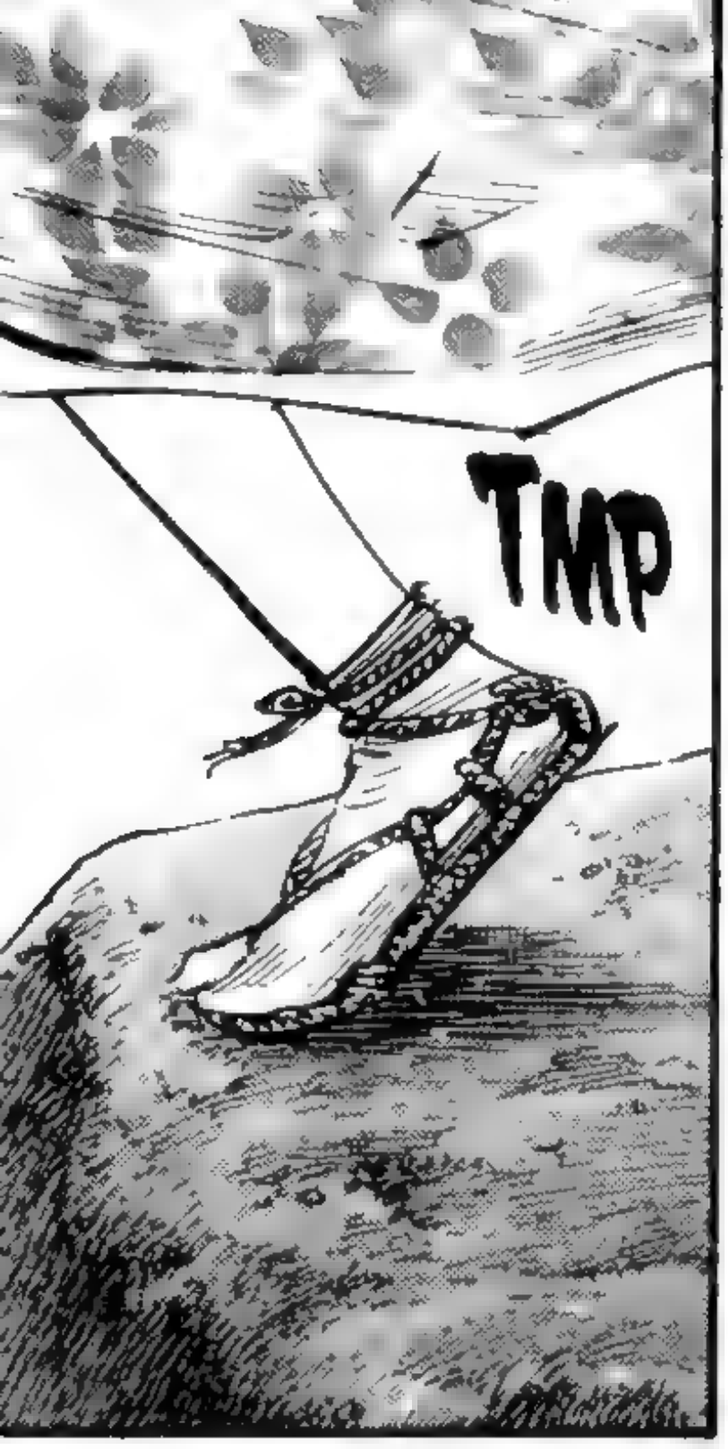
YOU SHOULD HAVE LET ME GO WITH YOU.



ZWSH

FSSHH
KTNK
...I NEED TO TELL YOU.
THERE'S ONE THING...

I WAS YOSHIOKA SEIJŪRŌ'S WOMAN.

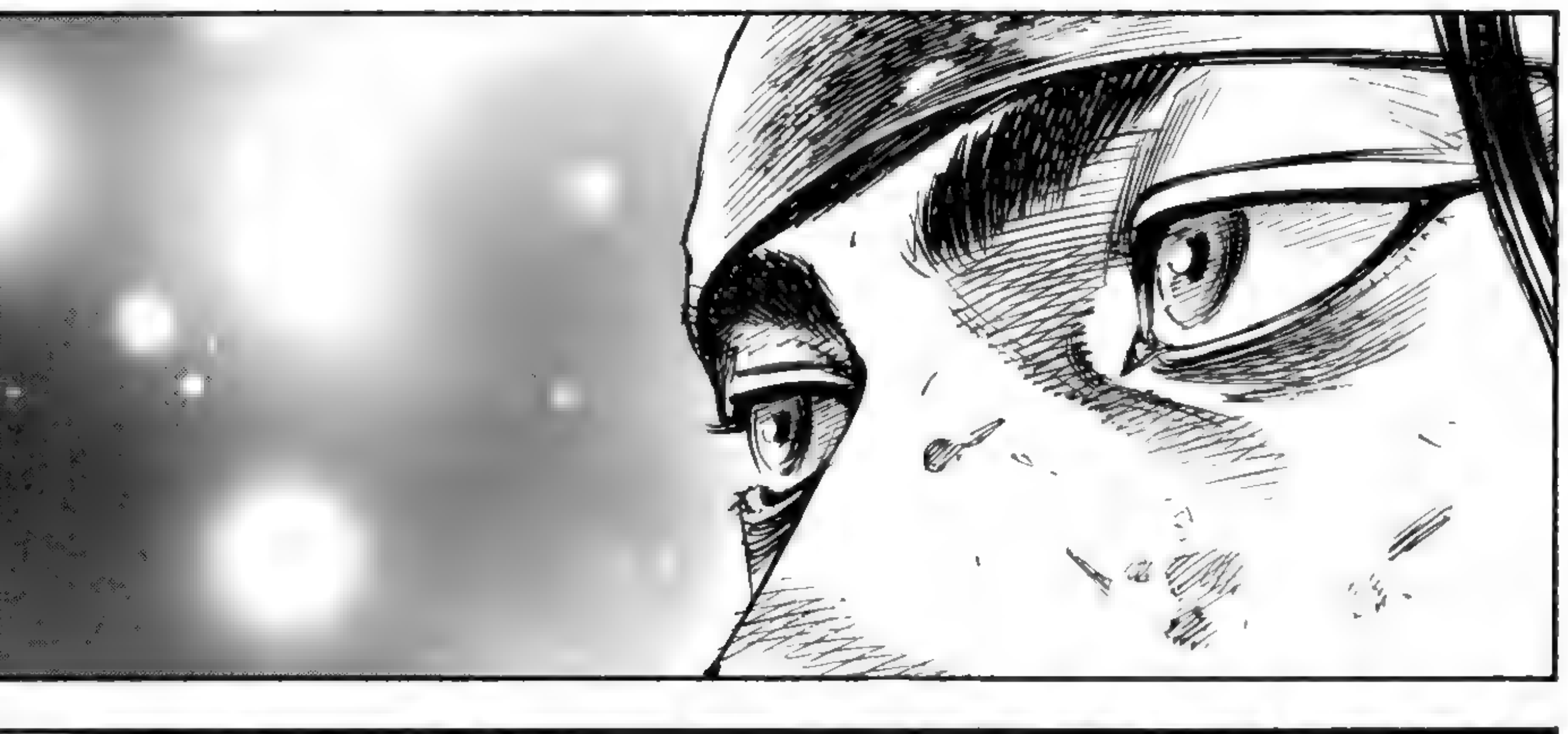

TMP

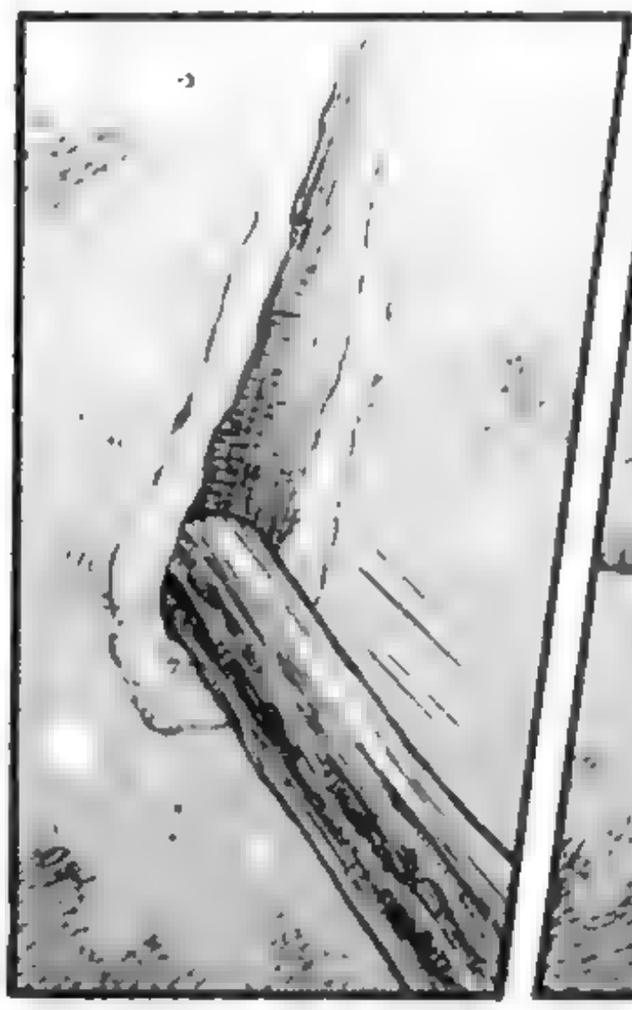
AH!

F
S
S
H
H

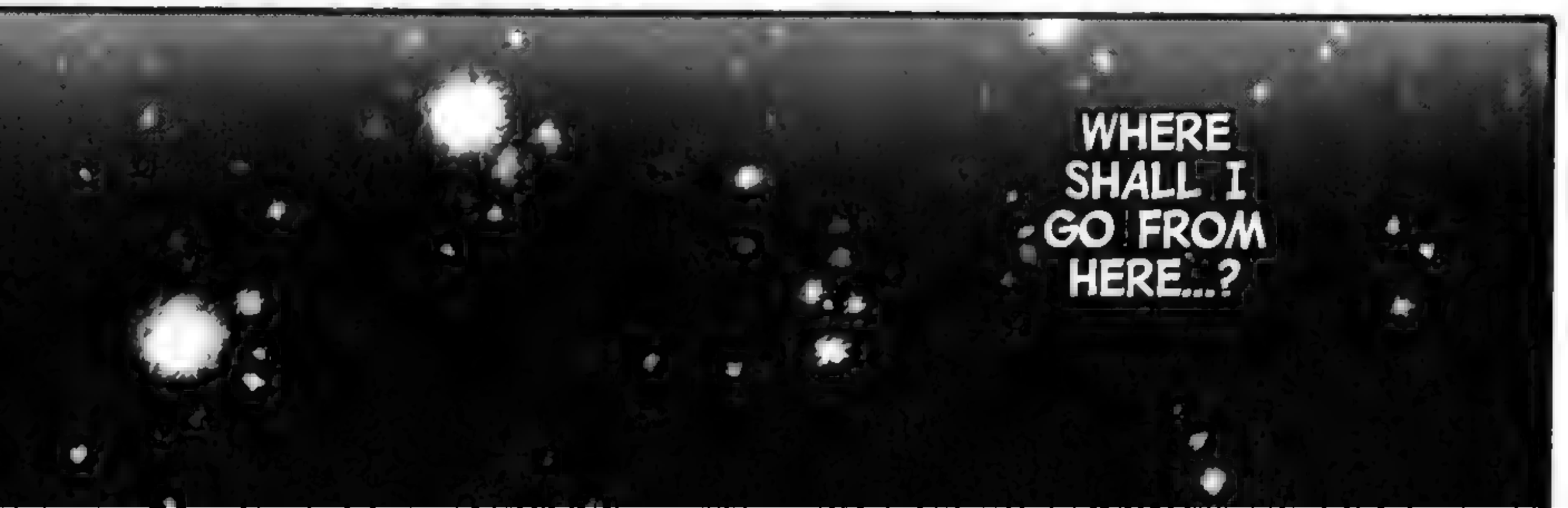
AHH!!

F
S
S
H
H
H





АННН!


WHERE SHALL I GO FROM HERE...?

KOJIRŌ...

Vagabond

Glossary and Extraneous Background Information

A Brief Historical Overview
The *Sengoku* (warring states) period (1482-1558) in Japan was a time of chaos and conflict. Central authorities, in the form of the imperial court and the shogunate, had grown increasingly weak and the land was effectively ruled autonomously by numerous *daimyo* (domainal lords). Looking to expand their spheres of control, the *daimyo* were constantly at war with each other. One *daimyo* in particular, Oda Nobunaga, set out on a mission to unify Japan by means of conquest. Incredibly successful, by the time of his assassination in 1582, he managed to control approximately one-third of Japan. One of Nobunaga's chief generals, Toyotomi Hideyoshi, became Nobunaga's successor to carry on the quest for unification. Through a process of conquest and conciliation, Hideyoshi succeeded in creating a federation amongst the *daimyo,* and by 1590, order was restored to Japan under Hideyoshi's rule. Hideyoshi's death in 1598, however, presented the question of succession. Most of the *daimyo* from the domains in the west remained loyal to the Toyotomi Clan and its 5-year-old heir, Toyotomi Hideyori. Tokugawa Ieyasu, however, leading the major *daimyo* from central and eastern Japan, challenged the Toyotomi clan's leadership. The two sides clashed at the Battle of Sekigahara (1600) in Mino (located in present day Gifu Prefecture) where the Tokugawa claimed an overwhelming victory. From that point on, the Tokugawa clan would effectively rule Japan for the next 250 years. The political stability that resulted put mass numbers of samurai out of work. Masterless samurai, known as *ronin*, were forced to wander the land to seek out employment. This, the beginning of the Edo Period (1600-1868), set the stage for many of the period dramas and *chambara* sword-fighting films that have popularized the image of the samurai to a Western audience.

Hon'ami Koetsu (1558-1637)
Famed artist and calligrapher who co-founded an influential arts movement called the Rinpa School. Koetsu was involved in numerous fields including tea ceremony, pottery, and calligraphy. In addition, Koetsu succeeded the line of his family's ancestral business of sword polishing and appraisals.

Hozoin Spear Technique
Created by the Buddhist monk Kakuzenbo Hoin In'ei (1521-1607) of Hozoin Temple, which was a sub-temple of Kofukuji Temple in Nara. This spear technique is typified by quick dexterous movements rather than the use of brute force.

Ito Ittosai (Dates unknown)
Founder of the Itto-ryu school of sword fighting. Before establishing his own style, Ittosai is said to have studied a variant of the Chujo-ryu style of sword fighting under Kanemaki Jisai's instruction.

Sasaki Kojiro (dates unknown)
The legendary archrival of Miyamoto Musashi, Kojiro is believed to have studied the Chujo-ryu style of swordsmanship under the instruction of either Toda Seigen or Kanemaki Jisai. Kojiro was renowned for his *Tsubame-gaeshi*, or "swallow-cut" technique which was inspired by the movement of a swallow in flight.

Shinmen Takezo
Miyamoto Musashi's boyhood name.

Takuan Soho (1573-1645)
A monk of the Rinzai sect of Zen Buddhism, by the time Takuan was 37, he was appointed abbot of the leading temple of the Rinzai sect, Daitokuji. Takuan was an important figure whose acute and brutally honest advice was sought by influential and powerful figures such as Emperor Go Mizuno and the shogun Tokugawa Iemitsu. His correspondence to Yagyu Munenori discussing Zen and swordsmanship entitled *THE UNFETTERED MIND* has become an influential treatise in both the areas of philosophy and martial arts. The pickled daikon radish, *takuan*, also bears his name.

The Yagyu Clan
Yagyu Muneyoshi Sekishusai (1527-1606) was the founder of the famed Yagyu-Shinkage school of sword fighting. His son Yagyu Munenori (1571-1646) was one of Tokugawa's key generals at the Battle of Sekigahara. Munenori was appointed the official fencing instructor of the Tokugawa Clan, and in 1632 the Yagyu were appointed the *ometsuke*—responsible for the surveillance of the *daimyo*. Although the Yagyu clan has been depicted in Kazuo Koike's *LONE WOLF AND CUB* as the plotters of the downfall of Itto Ogami, the general Japanese popular culture take on the Yagyu Clan is more positive. More specifically, Munenori's son, Yagyu Jubei (1607-1650), is viewed as a wandering hero protecting the people from evildoers.

Yoshioka Kempo (dates unknown)
A distinguished warrior during the *Sengoku* period (1482-1558) and the founder of the renowned Yoshioka school of sword fighting. Yoshioka Kempo mastered the Kyohachi style of swordmanship and then modified it to form the Yoshioka style. In the context of Inoue's *VAGABOND,* as well as in Yoshikawa's *MUSASHI*, Yoshioka Seijuro and Denshichiro are Kempo's sons, who are historically thought to have dueled with Miyamoto Musashi on numerous occasions.

About the Author

VAGABOND was created by Takehiko Inoue, author of the best-selling manga *SLAM DUNK*, with over 100 million copies in print worldwide. Critically acclaimed, Inoue received the 2000 Media Arts Award for manga from the Japanese Ministry of Culture as well as the 2000 Kodansha Award for best manga for his work on *VAGABOND*. In 2002, *VAGABOND* received the prestigious Tezuka Award for best manga, and in 2003, Inoue was nominated for a 2003 Eisner Award for best writer/artist. While *VAGABOND* continues its epic run in Japan, Inoue is simultaneously pushing the bounds of manga narrative with *REAL*—a heavy-hitting manga about wheelchair basketball. To date *VAGABOND* has sold over 22 million copies throughout the world. In addition to his numerous manga titles, Inoue also created the character designs for the PlayStation basketball game, *ONE ON ONE*.

About *VAGABOND* and Miyamoto Musashi

Takehiko Inoue's *VAGABOND*, based on Eiji Yoshikawa's novel *MUSASHI*, is a fictional account of the life of Miyamoto Musashi (1584-1645). The historical figure Miyamoto Musashi, author of the philosophical strategy guide *A BOOK OF FIVE RINGS*, was a master of the sword and was revered as a "sword-saint." He founded the Niten Ichi style of sword fighting, which is typified by fighting with both long and short swords simultaneously—holding the long sword with the right hand and the short sword with the left. Musashi was also a master of the "gentler arts"—he was a master of *sumi-e* (black ink drawings), metalworking, and woodcarving. The films that comprise *THE SAMURAI TRILOGY*, directed by Hiroshi Inagaki and starring Toshiro Mifune, were also based on Yoshikawa's *MUSASHI*. Inspired by the huge success of *VAGABOND* in Japan, in 2003 NHK produced the historical period drama *MUSASHI*. Also based on Yoshikawa's novel, this drama stars kabuki actor Shinnosuke Ichikawa as Musashi and TV star Ryoko Yonekura as Otsu.

A note on names:

The names presented within the context of this manga are presented in the traditional Japanese order—surname followed by first name. "Miyamoto" is Miyamoto Musashi's last name and "Musashi" is his first name. The name of the creator of *VAGABOND*, however, has been presented first name first, last name second. "Takehiko" is the author's first name and "Inoue" is his last name.